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The city of encounters

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THE CITY OF ENCOUNTERS



"HE SPRANG LIGHTLY OVERBOARD."

THE CITY OF BOSTON

George H. R. R.

Illustrated by Henry H. R.

NEW YORK
WILLIAM B. E. R.



THE CITY OF ENCOUNTERS

By
Horace Hazeltine

Illustrations by Harry Stacey Benton



NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY

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THE CITY OF ENCOUNTERS

CHAPTER I

TREASURE-TROVE

JOHN BROOKE sat on the side of the bed and stared dreamily, abstracted and unseeing, at the empty fireplace across the room.

"Is there anything I can get for you, sir?"

A blue-uniformed bell-boy, who had switched on the electric light, opened a window and turned up the catches of Brooke's traveling bag, asked the question as he stood with a hand on the doorknob.

Thus aroused, the young man extracted a dime from his trousers pocket and held it out to the lad.

"No, nothing, thank you," he answered. And then, as the boy's hand closed over the coin, he added: "You can have me called at eight o'clock to-morrow, if you will."

Left to himself, Brooke's dream was not renewed. In its place was an overwhelming sense of loneliness.

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Suddenly he had fallen prey to depression. He was alone, not only in a strange city, but in a strange land. And yet it was the land of his nativity. By birth he was an American; but from his infancy he had dwelt on sun-kissed Oahu in the far Pacific—the cross-roads of three continents. And his home had been Honolulu, the Beautiful, where “Aloha”—“Love to you!”—is the watchword.

He had found New York chill, damp and inhospitable by contrast. The cabman who drove him from the station had snarled at him, and the room-clerk in the hotel office below had treated him with superior indifference. Only the silver-buttoned bell-boy had been half-way kindly; and even his attentions bore stamp of the impersonal, the stereotyped, the fee-expecting.

He wondered whether Boston, whither he was bound, would give him more cordial greeting; whether it would seem less forbidding on first acquaintance. There, at all events, he would not be totally friendless, for, suddenly orphaned, he was going to his uncle—his mother’s brother—who was on the Stock Exchange and had promised him a place in his office.

Brooke was almost sorry now that he had decided to stop over in New York. It would have been

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pleasanter, probably, to go on and find a welcome at his journey's end, instead of halting on the threshold where he was unknown and kindly greeting was not to be expected. But he had long cherished a desire to see the great metropolis of the United States. He had read of it, heard stories about it, and listened to descriptions of its wonders until it had become a sort of luring obsession. And now, after traveling nearly six thousand miles, he had come upon his prize, only to find the gilt tarnished and the coloring dimmed.

Presently he drew his hand impatiently across his eyes, took a deep breath, stretched himself and stood up, making a gallant effort to throw off the melancholy mood which had dropped upon him—admitting that he was not fair to his host; that the fault was with himself and the conditions rather than with his stopping place and its people; that he was weary after his journey; that it was the weather and the hour which were to blame; that instead of observing during his short ride from the railway station he had fallen into a dream, imprisoned behind the rain-washed windows of his hansom cab, and that the dream had been one of mixed pleasure and pain and far removed from the present time and place.

He stood for a moment before the long-plate-mirror

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panel of a wardrobe door, telling his reflection these things, and scanning deprecatingly the figure which faced him. He scarcely blamed the cabman now for his snarl, or the room-clerk for his superior air, for he saw himself travel-soiled, unshaven and unshorn—his whole appearance shabby and unkempt. Swarthy-skinned, as are all dwellers in the Hawaiian archipelago, his duskiness was augmented by the dust of travel, until his race might be a matter of question; and his clothes, of good material and originally well-fitting, were rent in some places and stained with mire and soot in others.

He glanced sideways at the gray hat of soft felt which lay upon the bureau between the windows, and smiled. It was scarcely more than a rag, and it was several sizes too large for him. But it had been better than no hat at all, and his own was lost in the accident last night. For a little he wondered where he had got this disreputable-appearing makeshift, and then he remembered: Yes, it had been given to him at the farm house where he had carried *her*.

And so he fell to dreaming again, standing there, before the tall mirror. And on the summit of his hill of ghosts was she whose eyes were blue pools of liquid light, and whose voice was the echo of purling brooks.

TREASURE-TROVE

Once more he held her close within his arms, her pallid face upon his shoulder, her fair hair soft against his cheek. And then he flushed beneath his grime only to pale again at thought of how narrowly Death had passed her by. The Frenchwoman, her maid, sitting opposite her, had been a victim, killed instantly by the crushing weight of a detached upper berth, while a strong man, just behind her, had been dragged from the wreck an unrecognizable pulp of mangled flesh and broken bones.

Ten dead; twenty-four injured. That was the latest report; and for some of the maimed there was, so the papers said, scant chance of recovery.

Brooke's own escape, too, had been a miracle. He recalled now that first sudden forward dip of the car, followed by a moment of swaying, reeling uncertainty, and then that terrifying darkness, and that awful crunching, ripping thunder, mingling with panic yells and agonized shrieks, as the great bulk lurched over on its side, leaving him clinging, with bleeding hands, to the sash of a window from which all but a few splinters of shattered glass had been shaken.

Twenty-four hours had intervened, but the horror of the ensuing scenes was still very vivid. Yet over and above these rose the compensating joy of that all

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too brief acquaintance with her whom he had carried, limp and fainting, from out the hell of that wrecked and riven Pullman, wherein eager flames were lambently seeking to complete the dire work of a wrenched fishplate and a spread rail.

There was no gainsaying her gratitude. In her eyes and voice, more even than in her words, Brooke had found it, and his heart had pounded disconcertingly and his cheeks had flushed like a country school-boy's under the praise of a pretty teacher.

A very broad streak of romance ran through his nature, coupled with a spirited imagination, to which this experience made abundant appeal. For years he had lived largely in books, and especially in works of travel, novels of adventure, mystery stories and detective tales. Much of his reading had been of America, with American girls and women as heroines. But until this incident he had never met an American girl who answered to what he regarded as the true type—the type formed from his romance-gleamed impressions. There were American girls in Honolulu, to be sure—some resident there, and occasional young women tourists from the United States—but none had ever quite come within the radius of his ideal.

And now he tore his heartstrings with vain regrets. For, when opportunity had offered, he had failed to

TREASURE-TROVE

make the most of it. While she had voiced her gratitude he had sat half dazed by her beauty and her charm, silent and unresponsive. He saw it all over again now in his dream—the little kitchen of the humble farmhouse, the glowing cook stove, the rocking chair in which she sat with the fire light on her face; the farmer's wife kneeling and sewing up a long tear in her skirt; a group of young girls—the farmer's daughters, probably—standing awed but watchful in the shadows, and he, himself, awed, too, gazing, listening, but saying nothing.

Brooke had worked hard. After depositing his burden at the farmhouse he had gone back to the wreck and labored energetically and tirelessly for hours, returning at length, when nothing remained to be done, to inquire after the well-being of the young woman whom fate had veritably thrown into his succoring arms. He had found her then, as he saw her now again in his dream picture, safe and unharmed by so much as a scratch, and with only that one long rent in her skirt. How he had gazed his admiration, while he drank in thirstily every word and gesture of the girl as she poured forth her gratitude! He had, silently, too, made mental inventory of her charms, photographing them, as it were, on his memory. And in the midst of this en-

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gaging occupation there had come that abrupt interruption—the east-bound relief train was about to pull out, and there was barely time to catch it.

Hurriedly he had got to his feet, and as hurriedly had he bidden her good-bye—confusedly, too, with tell-tale blushes and stammering phrases. She was returning to Chicago, she had said, and the west-bound train was not yet ready, so the farmhouse had witnessed their hasty and, on his side, embarrassed parting.

He had gone away dreaming, just as he was dreaming now, and not until his train was well on its way towards Buffalo had he awakened to the fact that he did not even know this extraordinary young woman's name. All he had of her was his mental inventory and his memory photograph—poor enough, indeed, and most unsatisfying, though all the way to New York he had been making use of them, working them overtime, so to speak, to the effect at least of quite forgetting his own personal soiled and bedraggled appearance.

And so, his dream circling round, brought him back to self once more, and his unpleasantly disreputable reflection in the mirror.

He glanced now at his watch, and saw that it was some minutes after eleven. Well. he would have a

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bath and a shave and turn in, and to-morrow his trunks would be here and he could put on another suit of clothes, and the hotel barber should cut his hair, and he would buy himself a new hat. Then, maybe, New York would have more respect for him, and he, in turn, would like New York better. Thinking thus, he stepped into his bath-room and turned on the water, stopping to regulate the hot and cold faucets to the temperature he desired.

Then he returned to the bedroom, threw off his coat and removed his neck-scarf and collar, determined to shave while his bath ran. His shaving implements were in his traveling bag, which the bell-boy had placed on a table near the bureau, under an electric bracket.

He turned to this now, and with accustomed thumb pressed the spring. But the bag did not open. He pressed again, harder this time, and pulled viciously at the frame, but still it remained close fastened.

"I'm sure I didn't lock it," he told himself. "I haven't any key. I wonder if the jolting of the train could have sprung it."

Once more he tried, using all his strength; but still the lock held. Then he got out his pocket-knife and tried to force it, but the blade broke off short, and the lock seemed to laugh at his discomfiture. He

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made a quick survey of the room in search of some fitting implement with which to accomplish the lock's destruction, and his eye fell upon a pair of iron fire tongs, leaning beside the empty fireplace.

The fire tongs proved effective. With them he pried determinedly, until between the bending frames he forced one end of flattened iron. Now all that was required was strong pressure on the long end of the improvised lever, and— Snap! the lock gave way, and the bag yawned open.

Brooke threw down the tongs with a clatter and plunged a hand in after his razors. But the hand came out even more suddenly than it went in, for instead of encountering cloth, linen and such solid articles as brushes, soap boxes and razor cases, it had gone floundering about in a mass of more or less crinkly paper, and Brooke knew—intuitively, it seemed to him—that he had been robbed of his belongings, and that waste paper had been substituted for the stolen property.

Impulsively he spread the gaping mouth of the bag farther apart and stared into its paper-crammed depths. And then his eyes opened wider than ever, his mouth opened too, his breath stopped short with a sudden half inhalation, a shiver ran along his spine, and his hands trembled and grew weak. For the

TREASURE-TROVE

paper was all in oblong pieces of about the same dimensions, printed in green and black and yellow, with a little dash of red here and there, on a bluish-white or grey ground.

Brooke was not on the most familiar terms with the paper currency of the United States, in bulk, but unless he was greatly deceived this was the real article—no stage money about it—and at a rough estimate the bag must contain thousands—many thousands—of dollars; for before that first wide staring gaze there had danced double X's and C's and 50's and 500's until his eyes blinked themselves blind and his brain grew dizzy at the sight.

CHAPTER II

INVENTION.

FOR a moment Brooke fancied that he was still dreaming; that he had fallen asleep and that his subliminal self was reveling in imaginative riches. He had on more than one occasion had sleeping visions of this sort. Once he had dreamed of stores of gold beyond his ability to carry away. He straightened himself and looked about the room; glanced again into the mirror at his reflection; walked to a window and gazed down upon the gleaming, jewel-like electric signs which shone through the mist and rain along the Great White Way.

No, there was no dream about this; of that he was assured. And then he wondered if, after all, it had been an optical illusion. It was not within the range of possibility that such a transformation could have happened. The day of miracles was long past. Prepared to find that his eyes had deceived him, he returned to the table and its gaping pig-skin burden. Once more he stretched the mouth of the bag and looked in. The interior, illuminated by the

INVENTION

electric bracket lamp above, was packed tight with money.

He took out a handful of the bills and examined them with careful scrutiny. Some were new and stiff and crackling; others were soft and flimsy from much handling. He found shreds of blue silk fibre in the paper, which he thought was ample proof they were not counterfeit, but he closely inspected the engraving, the scroll work, the signatures, nevertheless. He was not an expert, but the bills certainly seemed to him genuine.

He dug his hands deep down in the bag and hollowed out the centre, thinking that beneath the money there might be some clue to its origin; but only more bills, in packages, in rolls and in loose disorder, rewarded him.

Then he turned his attention to the bag itself. It was of shabby pig-skin, of the shape known as a "kit-bag," and if it were not his own, it was certainly his own's twin brother. On one end of his, though, had been his initials—"J. L. B."—and on neither end of this was there any lettering whatever. That, then, was the explanation. He had taken this bag in mistake when he left the Pullman. But it was not his fault; for the porter had carried the bags out and had placed it in his hands as he alighted.

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It struck him at once that had his own bag contained so much money he would have guarded it more carefully. He could not conceive of a man carrying about this fortune and trusting it for an instant out of his personal custody. Such carelessness deserved punishment, and he doubted not the owner was being very sorely punished at just this moment, by which time he had probably discovered his loss.

Brooke smiled as he pictured to himself the mental distress of the loser.

"Serves him right!" he ejaculated. "He'll know better next time. It's lucky for him it fell into honest hands. Now I'll have a more careful look through the filthy lucre, and see if I can find some trace of the careless Midas who goes about so deliciously well-heeled."

Deliberately and with systematic care he began removing the money from the bag and laying it out on the table, estimating the amount of each handful as he did so, and religiously searching all the while for some scrap of writing or printing to indicate the name and address of the loser.

And as he proceeded with this work the wonder of his find grew more and more impressive, for before the bag was half empty he had roughly counted

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up to over fifty thousand dollars, and the denominations of the bills seemed to be increasing rather than lessening. And thus far not the sign of a name or anything indicative of ownership in any form had he found.

He worked more slowly now—counting more accurately and hunting still more searchingly—and all the while endeavoring to imagine the character of the man likely to have such an amount of money in his possession, transported in such a fashion, and with so little heed to its safe-keeping.

Bank messengers, brokers' clerks, merchants, importers, bookmakers, bribing politicians—all these were considered in turn and put aside for one good reason or another; the final result of his consideration being that the money was either the property of some eccentric millionaire or the plunder of some criminal who had purposely avoided all marks of identification on either the exterior or the interior of the article of conveyance. And for choice between these two, he was rather inclined to favor the latter conclusion, believing that in spite of all he had heard of American plutocrats they were outnumbered—the eccentric ones at all events—by the lower class of criminals.

“If,” he communed with himself, “this money is

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the ill-gotten proceeds of some law-evading project, it's a very grave question whether the law evader will dare to put in a claim for it; though it is not improbable that the robbed or swindled parties will sooner or later be forthcoming."

And just at that particular moment, as Brooke stood with two thousand or more dollars in his hand, seventy odd thousand spread over the table under the electric light, and the bag still unemptied, there came a resounding knock on his door.

Instantly the possibilities of what might ensue from his being discovered in his present occupation rushed in upon him. All the guesses he had just been making concerning the unknown loser of the bag and its contents would naturally be made by his discoverer regarding him; with the probable result of the same conclusion being reached, and the suspicion born that he was the unrighteous possessor of ill-gotten wealth. Nor would he be able, in such an event, to explain the situation. How many men, he asked himself, would believe his story that he had been given the bag in mistake by a Pullman porter?

No, his visitor, whoever he might be, must not see the money. To throw it back in the bag would in-

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volve recounting the whole, and already he had spent more than an hour in making his estimate.

For just a moment the thought assailed him that possibly the owner of the bag had watched him when he took it from the porter, and, for reasons best known to himself, had preferred that he, Brooke, should carry that precious burden from the station to a hotel, where the owner had now come to claim it, bringing Brooke's bag in exchange.

Again came the rap on the door; louder still now and more insistent, and Brooke, stepping hastily to the bath-room, intent upon securing a bath towel to throw over the money-strewn table, started back in dismay.

He had forgotten, in the excitement of his discovery, the faucets turned for his bath, and the little room was flooded from the overflowing tub. The floor was a miniature lake fed by the Niagara which poured over the tub's sides.

Hastily he turned off the flow, splashing to do so through the pool which spread vamp-high over the tiled flooring. Then, snatching a towel from a hook, he returned to his chamber, spread it across the table and the bank notes, closed the bag as best he could, and turned at last to the door, upon which the knocking was now repeated.

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"All right! All right!" he called, a little excitedly. "What's the trouble?" And with that he opened, to face a porter, who, mumbling something he could not understand, pushed by him and disappeared into the bath-room he had just quitted.

Brooke closed the door into the passage and followed him.

"Do ye bees wantin' to drown the leddy in the room below?" asked the man. "Sure the ceilin' over her bed is pourin' like a shower bat'."

"I'm very sorry, indeed," Brooke began, while the porter pulled the plug out of the tub and then threw every towel in the room upon the floor in an effort to absorb the pool.

For ten minutes or more the man worked energetically with the sopping towels, while Brooke stood in the doorway, vainly endeavoring to express his regrets.

"Ye wint to slape, I suppose, while ye wuz waitin'," the porter went on. "I've knowed it to happen—the likes o' that. But it's harrud on the hotel, ye know. The leddy may be after gettin' the pneumoney, and suein' us for the damages, over and above the cost of a new ceilin' and wall paper."

"O, I hope not," said Brooke seriously. "I'm sure I wouldn't want the hotel to lose anything on

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account of my carelessness, and yet—damages for pneumonia and a new ceiling and wall paper are, I am afraid, rather beyond my modest means.”

The porter rose from his task, and as Brooke backed into the bedroom the Irishman took his place in the doorway.

“Sure it’s shtill a bit damp in there,” he said. “Now if I had a dthry towel, I——”

As he spoke his eye fell upon the towel on the table, which was at his right hand.

In an eye-wink he had snatched it off, dragging in its train a scattering score of bills.

“Holy murther!” he exclaimed in dismay. “What be I afther doin’? Excuse me, sir. I’d no knowldge ye wuz a banker.”

For a moment Brooke stood quite still, startled by the sudden turn of things. Then he stooped and gathered up the money from the floor.

“It’s all right,” he protested, putting the best face possible upon the matter. “Never mind. You can use the towel if you want to. I didn’t know who was coming in, and I thought it best not to have so much cash on view.”

But his visitor still stood gazing at the array of funds upon the table, stunned, now that his first outburst of surprise was over, at the piles of greenbacks

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and yellow backs—more money than he had ever seen in all his life before.

As Brooke regained the upright, the recovered bills between his fingers, the man spoke again.

"Sure it's a fortune!" he exclaimed, his eyes wide. "Be yez a bookmaker, or what, I dunno?"

Brooke realized the necessity for some sort of an explanation. The demand was upon him with such suddenness that he was not prepared, and he paused for just a heartbeat to spur his wits.

"I'm a stakeholder," he said suddenly. "It's all on a bet."

The Irishman's mouth opened in astonishment.

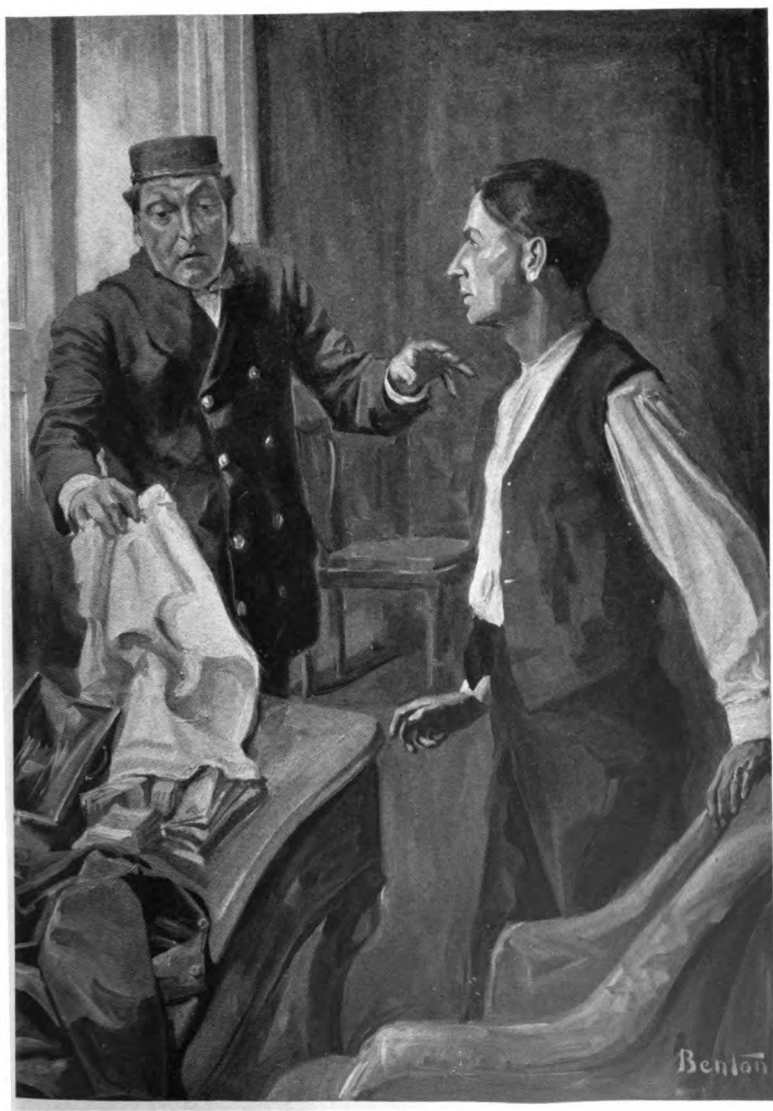
"Ah-h-h!" he murmured. "An' is it so! An' does one gintleman stan' to win all of ut?"

"Every blooming penny," answered Brooke, speaking truth.

The porter changed his position to get a better view of the piled wealth.

"Excuse me, sir," he apologized, "but wud yez moind tellin' me if ut's an iliction bit or a bit on a prize fight?"

"It's neither"—Brooke's inventive powers were now suddenly keenly active—"it's not half so sensible. It's a very silly wager, considering the enormous amount that is involved."



"SURE IT'S A FORTUNE!"

INVENTION

"Is ut, sir?"

"It concerns the daughter of the president of the Candy Trust."

The porter drew the length of the towel between his hands and looked expectant.

"One gentleman bets," Brooke went on, with studied seriousness, "that the young lady's eyes are blue, and the other gentleman bets they are brown. I hold the stakes and I am to decide." He had been a reader of romance to some profit.

A grin broadened the Irishman's mouth.

"An' if they bees grey?" he asked.

"The bet's a draw, and the whole amount goes to charity," added Brooke.

It was then that the porter turned away, shaking his astonished head, and went silently back to finish his work with the dry towel, while the fabulist smiled at himself in the mirror and rearranged the disturbed mounds of bank notes.

"I'll be afther goin' now," said his visitor a moment later, coming out of the bath-room, "an' I'd advise yez to be careful of thim shtakes. It suttenly do be a pity as gintlemin has nothin' bitter to do wid their money than to bit it on the color of a gal's eyes. Good night, sir!"

When he had gone Brooke drew a chair up to the

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table and sat down. He admitted to himself that his invention had been a foolish, simple thing; yet he believed it had served his purpose, which after all was only to convince the Irish porter that the money was not his property. He would finish his search and his estimate now, and then draw a fresh bath and get to bed. His shaving would have to be postponed until he could find a barber.

As he continued extracting the bills from the bag, running them roughly over, he planned as to the care of this fortune which had so strangely come into his hands. In the morning he would secure a piece of cord, tie the broken lips of the satchel together and carry it to a safe deposit vault, where it should rest until he could get some clue to its ownership. That, of course, provided there was no advertisement in the newspapers concerning it, which very possibly there would be.

He had just fingered over the last roll, and was totaling up his penciled notes when, once again, he heard a tapping on his door. He had no towel now to throw over the displayed wealth, and to cram it all back into the bag before he opened the door would only be to invite repeated and louder knocking. So he hurriedly made a screen, this time of his coat, which had been, lying on the bed behind him, and

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then, with renewed misgiving, turned the key and guardedly unclosed the door a few inches.

"It's only me, sir." He recognized the voice of the porter again, though the fellow spoke in a whisper, not to disturb sleeping guests who had their transoms open. "I've brought ye some clane towels, sir, and"—he hesitated and put his head half inside the narrow opening—"it's me as has a piece of news fur ye. They do be tellin' me that the leddy you kim nigh to drownin' in the room below, sir, is *her*, sir. Yes, sir, the very one, sir."

Brooke opened the door a little wider, and stared perplexedly.

"Is *her*?" he repeated. "The very *one*! What the devil do you mean? I haven't the——"

"*Her*! Yes, sir. The leddy you was afther shpaking of, sir. Miss Colby, sir. The leddy wid de eyes, sir. The darter of him as is called the Candy King, sir."

Brooke with difficulty restrained a smile. Colby, eh? He had not known even the name of the Candy Trust president, much less that he was really a father.

"Oh, you don't tell me!" he said, with assumed interest. "That's a strange coincidence, isn't it? I'll have a look at her to-morrow to decide that bet."

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He found a half dollar in his pocket, and gave it to the inquiring servitor.

"The night chambermaid is afther tellin' me her eyes do be black, sir," the man added, as he took the coin. "Thank ye, sir, and good night to ye."

Could it be possible, Brooke asked himself, that this idle invention of his was to involve him in complications? It was evident that already the money and the story of the bet had become gossip among the hotel servants. Before morning how much farther might it go?

Carefully he lifted his coat from the money-piled table and took up his memorandum. \$27,500, \$14,700, \$8,100, \$16,600, \$17,000, \$22,600, \$11,700. That was a fair count in round numbers—it would not vary, all in all, a thousand dollars either way—and the total was \$118,200.

"Suppose," murmured Brooke, his eyes dancing at the possibility, "only just suppose it should never be claimed!"

CHAPTER III

JOURNALISM

LONG before eight o'clock, the hour at which he had desired to be aroused, John Brooke was astir. His night had been restless, filled with sudden awakenings and punctuated by the ever recurrent thought of the bag of money, which he had placed under the bed clothes between himself and the wall. At dawn, as soon as there was sufficient light to see clearly, he had it out, the contents once more removed, and the bag undergoing a thorough, minute inspection. It had occurred to him that the name of the maker might be stamped somewhere upon it, and that if this were so it would afford a possible clue to the owner. But the maker's name was not to be found. Nor did he find a single mark save a barely decipherable "patented 1881" on one of the brass catches, which only told him that the hardware was of American manufacture, and that was scarcely to be regarded as significant.

Later, having put his find carefully out of sight, he rang for a page, and ordered the morning papers—all of them, for he was inexperienced, and had no

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idea which would be the most likely medium for the advertisement he half expected.

When they came he threw himself down on the bed again and began a systematic search. One after another he examined with careful deliberation, the sole result being a fixed conviction that New York women were amazingly careless as to their jewels and that New York fox terriers were a pack of ungrateful renegades.

Having thus exhausted the "Lost and Found" columns, he turned to the news, running casually over the headlines in search of something interesting, and glancing incidentally at the portraits and other illustrations. But scarcely had he scanned a page before he sprang to a sitting posture, clutching the paper eagerly with both hands, his head bent forward, his eyes devouring, his brain intent.

The headlines which provoked this sudden physical uprising and excited this absorbing mental interest were these:

KILLED IN FALL FROM TRAIN.

BODY SUPPOSED TO BE THAT OF JOHN BROOKE OF
HONOLULU, FOUND BESIDE TRACKS IN
MOTT HAVEN YARD.

And with electric swiftness he raced through the account which followed:

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"Close beside the railroad tracks in the Mott Haven yards last night," he read, "a section hand found the dead body of a young man, who had evidently fallen or jumped from one of the incoming trains. The man's skull was crushed and death was probably instantaneous. There were no papers on the body to serve as identification.

"The Empire State Express having passed this point only five minutes before the section hand's discovery, it was thought that the unfortunate man might have been a passenger on that train. ,

"It was learned later that a traveling bag belonging to John L. Brooke had been unclaimed when the express reached the Grand Central Station, and the colored porter of the Pullman car on which Brooke was a passenger declared he had not seen him leave the car.

"The porter also stated that when he went to the vestibuled platform on approaching the terminal he found that one of the side doors had been opened. It is supposed that Brooke went out to the platform for air, opened this door, and failing to hold fast as the train swung around a curve at Mott Haven was thrown off.

"Brooke came from Honolulu, and was on his way to visit his uncle, a Boston stock broker, named Perry.

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"He was one of the few passengers on the Overland Express, which was wrecked at Sledville, Ind., two nights ago, who escaped injury.

"The body was removed to the morgue."

Having read the article once in frantic haste, Brooke read it now again more slowly, his brain swept meanwhile by a flood of retrospection and an avalanche of possibilities. In his excitement over finding the money he had paid small heed to his own missing bag with its inexpensive and unimportant contents. His trunk he had checked straight through to his uncle in Boston; but the fact that he was without a change of clothing had failed to make any particular impression, absorbed as he was in the chance finding of a fortune, the reward for the return of which, he fancied, would be more than enough to compensate him for his loss and inconvenience.

And now it seemed that the only logical conclusion was that the man who lay dead at the morgue was the rightful possessor of the bag and the money which had fallen so strangely into Brooke's hands. And, there being no letters or other papers on the body, there was nothing to indicate the man's identity. It was natural, perhaps, under the circumstances, Brooke thought, his own bag having been unclaimed, to fancy that he was the victim.

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He wondered whether his uncle would come on to identify the body. He supposed he would, and yet he would be at a disadvantage. Alexander Perry had not seen his nephew since he was four years old, and Brooke doubted that he had ever been the recipient of a photograph in all the intervening time. Certainly he had had no photograph recently. How then was he to know?

Would not the man's clothes, or his hat at least, have some identifying label to prove that he was not from Honolulu? All the chances were that they would. And yet all the chances were that in his pockets would have been found some card or memorandum to prove, if not his name, at least that he was not a stranger from that far Pacific isle.

Brooke ran over in his mind the men who had been his fellow passengers from Buffalo, in an effort to identify this unfortunate, so shockingly taken from a life which must have been worth living, seeing that he possessed such an ample fortune in ready money. But he had failed to observe with any degree of interest the men on the train. He had been so deeply absorbed in reviewing the incidents of the wreck of the night before, and especially the scene in the little farmhouse, and in reproaching himself for failing to learn the name of the woman he had succored, that

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his fellow passengers were little more to him than shadows, leaving no impression whatsoever upon his memory.

But the question for him to decide now was whether or not to reveal himself. Should he go to the morgue and declare that the body brought there was not his body? Should he wire his uncle that he was still alive and that the announcement of his death, as Mark Twain once graphically and humorously put it, was premature? Should he turn the bag of money over to the authorities and claim his own bag in return? The situation offered a problem that required a deal of thinking for its proper solution, and thinking flavored with sound judgment.

It must be remembered, however, that Brooke was not only young but romantic. Had he been older and more prosaic his reasoning might have taken a different trend. As it was, it ran along the lines of pure adventure as he had learned it from story books. There was no flaw in his honesty. Not for one moment did he consider the possibility of making this one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars his own. It was not his. That was conceded from the first. But he felt that he had no right to deliver it until he could find the rightful owner. If he turned it over to the coroner or to the police there was no

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telling what disposition might be made of it. He had read something of the easy consciences of municipal officers in the great cities of the United States, and he was disinclined to take any risks.

For the present, at least, he decided, it would be well to do nothing. He would, to use the vernacular, "lie low" or "sit tight," awaiting developments. It was quite possible that the body at the morgue would be identified by friends of the dead man, who would know of what he was bringing to New York, and raise a hue and cry for its production. Then Brooke would step forward and deliver it.

That this waiting might involve him in difficulty did not suggest itself, or if it did he put it aside, too confident in his integrity of purpose to give it weight.

Now, the first thing to be done was to get the money to a place of safety. The safe deposit vault idea of the night before recurred to him, and he resolved to make inquiries as to the nearest responsible place of this kind. In the meantime, however, he must have his breakfast, and since he could hardly carry the bag of money with him into the restaurant, and he was disinclined to leave it unguarded, he rang for a waiter, and ordered the meal served in his room.

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It was not quite eight o'clock when he sat down to bacon and eggs and coffee, still so busy with his thoughts and all the involved chain of possibilities that he scarcely knew what he was eating. But even thus early he was doomed to disturbance. His telephone whirled loudly, startling him from his reverie.

"A reporter to see Mr. Brooke."

That was the message he heard, and at the sound of the words he winced. In his rumination he had altogether forgotten that on the register in the hotel office he had written in large, flowing hand, "John L. Brooke, Honolulu, H. I."

However much he might desire to rest quietly, while events shaped themselves, that signature would be sure to betray him, shrieking aloud, as it were, that John Brooke, of Honolulu, was not killed by falling from a train in the Mott Haven yards, but was still living, a guest at the Hotel Astor, occupying room X108, on the seventh floor, facing Broadway.

The shock of the discovery silenced him for a moment, and then he heard repeated:

"Hello! I say, there is a reporter here to see Mr. Brooke."

For just a second he was tempted to say that Mr. Brooke was not in, but thought better of it immediately.

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"All right," he returned, "ask the reporter to come up."

And having given this direction he returned to his breakfast, poured out a second cup of coffee for himself, lighted a cigarette and idly picked up a sheet of one of the newspapers which strewed his bed.

He had no more than folded the paper and started to make a pretence of reading when there came a rather demandful rap upon his door.

Brooke arose and opened it, the paper still in his left hand. A boyish youth, tall and lean, with fair hair and frank blue eyes, confronted him.

"I'm from the *Sphere*," he said cheerily, by way of introduction. "Is this Mr. Brooke?"

Brooke studied the lad's face for a brief moment, doubtful still as to the better course.

"Yes," he answered at length, and saw his air castles toppling as he did so.

The young reporter smiled affably, which Brooke felt was not exactly the manner he would expect from one who was about to resurrect a dead man, but he held the door wide and waved the visitor in with a movement of his newspaper.

"I've come," began the youth—and again Brooke winced in expectation of the blow—"I've come to get you to tell me all about this little affair between

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gentlemen. I suppose it can be called that, eh? I understand a very large amount of money is involved, and that at present it is in your possession."

Brooke did not exactly understand. Affair between gentlemen! Did the fellow imagine there had been a duel?

"I'm sure," he returned, determined not to betray himself, unless it became absolutely necessary, "I haven't the slightest idea——"

"I thought you'd catch on," explained the reporter, blithely. "I am told that a wager has been made concerning the color of a young lady's eyes."

Brooke sighed with sudden relief. This, then, was the young man's errand; so, for the present at least, his air castles stood firm on their cloud foundations.

"Oh, that!" he exclaimed, his tone evidencing his relief, which was made still more apparent by a breezy laugh. "Well, there's nothing in that." And then he motioned the reporter to a chair and offered him one of his cigarettes.

"Nothing in it?"

"Nothing. Not a scintilla of fact. Why, would you believe it, I didn't even know there was such a thing as a Candy Trust. I've heard of the Sugar Trust, of course, but the Candy Trust was purely

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imaginative. How did you learn of this little fairy tale, anyhow?"

The reporter was used to this sort of thing. It was just exactly the way men talked when the story was true and they wanted to throw dust in the eyes of the newspapers. Here was Brooke asking questions instead of answering them. Brooke did not know this, however. He was really in deadly earnest, and thoroughly honest. Still he did not want that story to get into print for more reasons than one—but the chief reason was that he could not afford, at this time, to have his name used publicly.

"The clerk in the office told me of it," confessed the newspaper man. "He said it was a fine story. If it isn't true, how did it get about?"

"I told it to the Irish porter here last night, to explain— Well, you see, he came in here while I was counting some money. Not my own, but the property of—well, a client of mine. He stared so hard I thought I'd better explain having so much cash on hand, so I told him the first thing that came into my head. There you have the whole business. It's nothing for the newspapers. As you can see, it would put me in a very awkward position to have this come out, involving the name of Miss Colby."

"Miss Colby!" repeated the reporter. "I thought

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you said just now you didn't even know there was such a trust as the Candy Trust, and— Pardon me, sir, but it's not consistent that you should know the name of its president's daughter."

Brooke made haste to explain. To do so he had to reveal the fact that the porter, returning, had told him that he had nearly drowned Miss Colby in the room below.

The reporter's eyes lighted. It was a good story. True or not true, it was a good story just the same.

"I don't like to say I doubt your word, Mr. Brooke," he advanced boldly, "but nobody thinks anything, you know, of trying to string us reporters. You wouldn't be in the fashion if you didn't do it. And I'm not such a fool but that I can appreciate your position. But I've just got to make something of this affair. I wouldn't be true to my paper or to my profession if I didn't, and I should like to have the absolute facts—the names of the gentlemen who——"

Brooke sprang up, his eyes flashing.

"By George!" he shouted. "I'm not used to being called a liar! I won't take that from any man. I've told you the gospel truth, and yet you have the nerve——"

The reporter was on his feet, too, smiling calmly

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and a little aggravatingly. He was half a head taller than Brooke, but not so powerful.

"Oh, come, come, Mr. Brooke," he soothed, "you mustn't misunderstand me. I shouldn't think of disbelieving you ordinarily, only—" and as Brooke came nearer, with fists clenched, he added quickly, "I apologize, sir, I meant no offense, really. I hope you'll forgive me."

Brooke's hands relaxed and he stood for a second looking into the other's frank blue eyes. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, he thrust his right hand forward, palm uppermost. The youth seized it, gripping it with hearty fervor, while his face flushed.

"You're the right sort, my lad," Brooke was saying. "I like to see determination not to be done or to be downed. I was only a little hasty, that was all, and I ask your pardon for my show of temper. And now I tell you, honestly, as man to man, that I haven't attempted to deceive you. You know the whole affair from first to last. If you must print it, then I suppose you must, but I'd much rather you wouldn't."

The reporter still held his hand.

"Mr. Brooke," he said, and there was a little quaver in his voice, "I appreciate what you've said. I'm not a blackguard, and no money any paper could

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pay me would induce me to do a blackguardly thing. There's only one stipulation I want to make. I'll promise not to mention this story if you'll promise not even to see any other newspaper man."

"I promise," Brooke agreed.

The youth took out his card case and gave Brooke his card.

"Maybe you'll have a story some day that I *can* print," he said, smiling. "If so, I hope you'll send for me."

"I'll be glad to."

When he was gone Brooke, looking at the card, on which was printed "Eugene Moore," experienced a sense of emotional quietude such as he had not known since the railway accident. The reporter had attracted him. There was something magnetic about the young fellow which, in spite of that momentary outbreak, rubbed him the right way. He felt, intuitively, that he had found a friend, and—his visitor had not once mentioned the man who fell from the train.

CHAPTER IV

MASQUERADE

"IF I am to escape newspaper interviewers," Brooke mused, deliberating, "I fancy I had better change my hotel, and, for the time being at least, adopt another name."

In pursuance of this fancy he bribed a page to fetch him a piece of twine, tied up his gaping bag of paper currency, donned his disreputable-appearing rag of a hat, and bag in hand descended to the hotel office, where he paid his bill and obtained the address of the New Netherlands Bank as a perfectly safe depository for his valuables.

It was a bright May morning; the balm of spring was in the air, and Broadway, washed clean by the rain of the preceding night, wore a fresh, sparkling air of newness and well-keptness that was a surprise to Brooke, who had gleaned his first shadowy and not favorable impression through a cab's streaming windows, seeing only garish lights and dim, gloomy, tower-like buildings, half-hidden and mistily indistinct.

The broad plaza in front of the hotel, with its di-

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verging car tracks, its array of cabs and automobiles, all glinting in the morning sun, arrested him for the moment, and he stood on the stone steps, drinking in the scene, enlivened as it was by many people crossing and recrossing, coming and going. Involuntarily he compared it with Honolulu, the city he knew best, beautiful but still half rural; with San Francisco, late risen from earthquake and fire, a metropolis of ruins; with Chicago, in which he had stopped one bleak day;—he still felt in his marrow the chill of the raw lake wind.

He was almost prepared now to like New York. It struck him as vividly masculine, filled with the red blood and sinews of life, and fair with the fairness of the young and ardent lad. Honolulu had appealed in other wise. Its beauty was feminine; its airs were languorous. It seemed—had always seemed—like a charming woman, decked in jewels and flowers, perfumed and poetic. And for these qualities he loved it. But, if not at first sight, certainly at second, New York was inspiring. Already he felt the thrill of the city's vast, restless, pulsing energy. The city's voice spoke to him in march rhythm. It was as though he heard strains of martial music, and his feet tingled to get into step.

He had been about to hail a cab, but he asked his

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way instead, and set off to walk, carrying his precious burden with a firm-locked grip, half fearful that it might be snatched from him by some one of the many passers-by.

The shop windows attracted him, but he deemed it best not to loiter. He could divert himself with them after he had placed his treasure in safety. The bill boards in front of the Metropolitan Opera House wooed him, too, but he caught only a name or two as he hurried past, and turned at length into the open doors of the bank.

The formalities necessary to the safe-guarding of his bag of treasure were neither many nor intricate, but almost at the outstart he stumbled. His signature was required. To hesitate in writing might justly arouse suspicion, and yet he had not decided on what name to adopt. But he gained a momentary truce by fidgeting with his pen, examining the point, shaking off superfluous ink and dipping it a second time.

Then, as if he had written that signature and none other since he had learned to write, he wrote *John Moore*. For the surname of the reporter had clung to his memory, and in his perplexity it crowded out all other suggestions. He experienced a sense of relief as he wrote it, however. He believed that he

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had executed the manœuvre in a way to excite no question, and all was well.

A clerk was looking over his shoulder.

"And your address, please, Mr. Moore," he said.

His address! He had none. He had just left one hotel and had not yet chosen another. In all New York he knew the names of only two. He could not say the Astor. So only the Waldorf-Astoria remained. Almost before he realized it, he had written it down.

He thought he saw the clerk glance curiously at that awful hat of his. He admitted to himself that he was not, in appearance at least, what he imagined the typical Waldorf-Astoria guest might be. But when the clerk spoke there was nothing to indicate suspicion. He simply asked:

"Do you care to put a value on the bag and its contents?"

Brooke thought for a moment. To say a hundred thousand dollars would, he decided, arouse question at once. Besides, it was not necessary.

"No," he answered. The clerk was looking at him very scrutinizingly. He fancied the next request would be for reference, and he had none to give. In lieu of it—before it was asked—he volunteered an explanation.

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"I had the misfortune to be in a railroad wreck out in Indiana," he stated, "and the good fortune to escape with a whole skin, but rather damaged attire. You must excuse my appearance. I came straight through, landed in New York last night, and wanted to get that bag safe before I did anything else. I tell you this to account for my rather disreputable appearance."

The clerk smiled deprecatingly.

"Not disreputable," he said suavely. "If I had sized you up as disreputable that would have been the end. We don't store goods here for disreputable-appearing persons. We are fairly good judges. Clothes don't make the man."

Brooke smiled in turn.

"Thank you," he responded, "but I am rather ashamed of my looks. However, I'll soon change them, now."

The clerk gave him a warehouse receipt, and he climbed the marble stairs from the vault ante-room and passed through the bank out into Broadway once more.

At the door, a small man with a sallow skin, a protuberant nose and small, rat-like eyes leered at him. Brooke looked an inquiry.

"Did you make it all right?" the man asked.

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Brooke stared, uncomprehending, and the man leered again, twisting his head with a gesture which indicated that he was not to be deceived.

"I'm on," he said confidentially. "Swag!"

Now Brooke understood. He had encountered a less astute judge of character than the clerk he had just left. This fellow, who was evidently a crook, had seen him go in, and had mistaken him for one of his own craft. Instantly the suggestion came to him that if this fortune was really stolen money the man beside him might be valuable in giving him a clue. He had begun to fancy that the finding of the owner was not going to be the easiest matter in the world, and so he must take advantage of every possible wind, no matter from what quarter.

"Sh!" he warned, glancing apprehensively over his shoulder. "Do you want to tell all New York?"

The little man drew his hand across his lips.

"I've got the price of a drink," he murmured suggestively.

Brooke hesitated just an instant.

"All right," he said under his breath, looking the other way, "trot along. I'll join you. We'd better not be seen together."

The other threw him a look of doubt. May be this

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was a ruse to shake him off, he thought. But he decided to chance it. Brooke watched him cross Broadway and stop in front of a saloon on the Fortieth Street corner. Then the fellow turned about and watched Brooke—who crossed after him, and eventually followed him through the swing door.

Before the bar they again stood side by side, a glass of beer before each.

“You’re fly, all right,” Brooke said.

“It was easy,” the other replied. “I’ve seen it tried a hundred times. But always before they wouldn’t take it. How did you square ’em?”

“The man liked my face,” Brooke explained.

His companion laughed.

“And them clothes!” he added. “Gee! But you had a nerve goin’ in like that. You’d oughter put on a swell front for that business. What address did you give ’em?”

Brooke told him the truth, and the fellow roared.

“It’s past me how you done it,” he said. Each man sipped his beer.

“What was the game?” the little man asked, speaking out of the corner of his mouth, though the barkeeper was washing glasses at the other end of the bar.

“Can’t you guess?” Brooke asked in turn.

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"Not a safe?"

"No, it came out of the West."

A light broke on the other's face.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I'm on. Much of it?"

Now this was precisely what Brooke did not wish. His companion was altogether too acute. He had expected him to put his surmise into words which might prove informing. Instead of that he had simply confessed knowledge, and Brooke was no wiser than before. His companion knew, but he did not.

"Sure you're right?" Brooke angled.

"Sure; I know. How much? Pretty big, eh?"

"Fair," Brooke admitted.

"Good get away, eh?"

"We're hoping."

The little man finished his beer.

"I never see you about here before, Bo," he ventured presently. "Been working in the West, eh?"

Brooke nodded.

"Chicago?"

Brooke nodded again.

"Know New York?"

"A little."

"Well, what you don't know I can put you wise to. I'm Shorty Hanks. Everybody knows me, and I knows everybody. See? I'm generally around

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the Narasac, and if you care to drop in there some afternoon I'll introduce you to the gang."

"Thank you," said Brooke. "Have another beer?"

"No, not this morning, if you'll excuse me. Come in and see the boys, and—good luck to you! I'm goin' on." He stuck out a thin but sinewy hand, with cigarette-stained fingers.

Brooke took it.

"Good-bye," he said. "I'll look you up some day."

And when he had gone Brooke wondered whether he had been wise or foolish. He had let this man believe he was a criminal, and, so far at least, had gained nothing by it. For a moment the idea presented itself that this so-called "Shorty" Hanks might be a detective. In which event he had simply given hostages to trouble. But he was now, more than ever, cognizant of the importance of fresh raiment, and leaving the saloon looked about for an outfitter's shop. Nor had he very far to look. The neighborhood abounded, it seemed, in establishments of this sort, and a half hour sufficed to accomplish his purchases, and see him so smartly dressed in a suit of brown tweed with brown Derby to match, low tan shoes, and everything else in keeping, that it

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was doubtful whether those who had met him prior to the transformation would recognize him in his changed guise.

All that now remained to complete the metamorphosis was a visit to a barber's, and at sight of a red and white striped pole he plunged down into the little basement shop before which it vaunted its colors.

The shop he found very bright and clean and attractive, with marble floor, white tiled walls, and white-jacketed artisans, to one of whom he submitted himself, stretching out in the most luxurious barber chair it had ever been his lot to occupy, and closing his eyes in blissful prospect.

As the barber deftly plied his razor there came to Brooke's ears snatches of a conversation that was in progress between the occupants of two adjoining chairs.

"I wouldn't have believed that of Kennedy," he heard one of them say. "I always thought he was on the square."

"Maybe he'll turn up yet," suggested the other.

"No chance. It's a clear case of skip with the coin. Foley wired he had started and would be at the Cadillac this morning, and there's no sign of him."

"It does look bad."

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"Damn bad. But if I ever get my lamps on him it'll be a poor day for Kennedy."

There was silence for a little as each man's head was wrapped in a steaming towel. Then Brooke heard:

"Left the country, do you think?"

"Not yet. He couldn't. But that'll be his game."

"He won't dare show up here."

"Oh, no. He'll sail from Boston or Philadelphia, or may be Montreal, the dirty robber."

The conversation interested Brooke. Maybe, he thought, Kennedy's body was that which had been given his name, and perhaps it was Kennedy's money which he had just stored in the safe deposit vaults. He determined to have a look at the speakers. He could not see them now, but when they should leave their chairs he would raise his head and get a glimpse of them in the mirror that his chair faced.

He still heard them talking, but their voices were lower now, and their words did not reach them. He lay there, thinking. The chair was very restful and the shaving process was soothing. He had slept badly the night before, and he was naturally drowsy.

Then he awoke with a start, as a hot towel was clapped under his chin and close to his cheeks and pressed down upon his forehead, the barber holding

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it firmly with both hands. As he steamed he realized that he had been sleeping. When the towel was removed he raised himself in his chair and glanced in the direction whence the voices had come. But the other chairs were empty, and the barbers were sitting across the little white shop waiting fresh customers and reading the newspapers while they waited. The man who had been looking for Kennedy had gone, and so had his companion.

"After all," said Brooke to himself, "it isn't likely it was that money he was expecting, and I dare say Kennedy, whoever he may be, is alive and well and having a corking old time with his plunder."

He had ordered a new trunk and some wearing apparel and other toilet necessities sent to the Waldorf-Astoria, so it seemed to him advisable to secure a room there before his purchases should arrive. But not being quite sure of the route, he hailed a hansom cab, and the next moment was bowling swiftly down Broadway, feeling very much of a gentleman indeed as he sat with his arms resting on the apron, while his eyes devoured both sides of the street and the middle at one and the same time.

But Broadway as he viewed it now scarcely came up to his expectations. Between Longacre and Herald Square it is not an imposing thoroughfare by

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day. At night it coruscates with electric brilliancy, but at high noon it impresses one as bare and commonplace, with the majority of the buildings low and almost shabby. The approach to the Waldorf-Astoria, however, through Thirty-fourth Street brought with it an added dignity, and as the cab rolled in under the iron arcade, in its fresh coat of black paint, Brooke felt a little awed by the grandeur of the entrance. And the interior, with its lofty ceilings, its massive onyx columns with their gilded capitals, its plate-glass partitions through which he caught glimpses of towering palms, snowy napery and glinting silver, and its general atmosphere of richness combined with busy active movement, sent such a thrill through him as is only provoked by the pleasantly unusual.

He wrote "John Moore" on the register, added "Chicago" as his residence, and was assigned to a room and bath on the twelfth floor. No, he would not go up, he told the clerk. His luggage would be along later. In the meantime he would lunch.

Then he walked through the public rooms of the ground floor, stared a little awkwardly if not rudely at some of the showily dressed women, glanced with equal interest at some of the elaborately attired men, bought an early edition of an evening paper, and

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finally selected a window table in the café where he could divide his attention between the scenes within and the scenes without.

He found in the paper a repetition of the story he had read that morning concerning the man who had fallen from the train and who, by general consent it seemed, was now referred to as John Brooke. Added to the original story was a despatch from Boston which told of an interview with Alexander Perry, "a wealthy stockbroker," who stated that he had been expecting his nephew to reach Boston within a few days, and that he had received a telegram announcing the young man's arrival in San Francisco, and his departure for the East. Mr. Perry, the newspaper account continued, "left Boston this morning for this city, to claim the body if he should be convinced that it is really that of his nephew."

When Brooke raised his eyes from the paper a waiter stood beside him, awaiting his order, so he turned his attention to the menu. But even as he ran it through, a name called in the clear, high-pitched voice of adolescence—called and repeated insistently at intervals—arrested and distracted him.

"Mis-tah Moore!"

He had heard it first from a distance, the three syllables called in a sing-song rhythm. Now it came

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nearer. A page was approaching his table. There was but one chance in ten thousand that the "Mr. Moore" wanted was he. No one could have a message for him as "Mr. Moore" save the hotel people themselves or the Safe Deposit people. Nevertheless, he stopped the boy.

"What Mr. Moore?" he asked.

"Mr. John Moore," answered the youth. "Room 1,671."

That was his room number, but as he took the square envelope and tipped the page he felt that there must be some mistake.

The waiter was growing impatient, so he placed the note beside his plate and gave his order. This accomplished, he took the note up again. The envelope was one furnished by the hotel. The flap bore the hyphenized initials W-A, in gilt. He decided, therefore, that he was being addressed by the management, and tore it open, wondering what the management wanted of him. But the enclosure was hardly a business communication. The writing was distinctly feminine. He read it through with increasing wonder and perplexity. What he read was this:

"Dear Mr. Moore:

"You will doubtless be surprised at receiving a

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note from an entire stranger. But we have mutual friends, and one of them wrote me from Chicago several days ago that you were coming to New York, and asked my husband and myself to do what we could to make it pleasant for you. I won't give you this friend's name now, because I am depending a good deal on your curiosity to secure what I crave—a visit from you. You shall learn all about it this very evening, if you will consent to dine with us. We are very plain people, living in Harlem, but we know what is good, so if you will come, just as you are—no dressing or bother—I will guarantee you a good home dinner in congenial company.

“'Phone me as near three o'clock as you conveniently can whether we may look for you, and believe me,

“Most cordially yours,

“LUCILLE MUMFORD.”

The address on West 103rd Street, and the telephone number, were added.

Brooke read the note through a second time and was more puzzled than ever. It was out of the range of possibility that he should be the John Moore for whom the note was intended, seeing that he had only assumed the name a few hours before. There was, however, such a ring of thorough cordiality about the communication that he experienced a sense of regret that he was not—could by no chance be—the

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lucky dog for whom such a welcome lay in store. In this way the effect of the note was depressing. It made him feel so terribly, hopelessly alone and friendless.

When he had finished his luncheon he took the note to the hotel office.

"This is meant for some other John Moore, of Chicago," he explained.

The clerk ran his finger down his alphabetical list of guests.

"There isn't any other John Moore here," he said.

"Then he must be on the way," Brooke declared.

"That note is not for me."

The clerk took it, scribbled something on it in pencil and thrust it into a pigeonhole.

Turning away Brooke glanced at a clock which medallioned the wall above him. He had lunched early and the time still lacked a few minutes of one. The afternoon was before him in which to see more of the city, but for a moment being at a loss which part to choose, he strolled into the bar and bought a cigar. At the cashier's desk he paused for a moment. The cashier's smile invited conversation.

"May be you can give me a suggestion," he solicited. "I want to see something of the city this afternoon. Where shall I go?"

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"How about Central Park?" asked the cashier. "It's a fine afternoon. Take a hansom through the Park, then up Riverside Drive to Grant's Tomb and Claremont."

"Fine!" exclaimed Brooke. But when he reached the street he decided that he preferred to walk. A policeman directed him up Fifth Avenue, and he swung briskly northward, mounting the crest of Murray Hill.

For observation of the saliently characteristic features of the most fashionable thoroughfare of the United States the hour was not propitious. Nevertheless, Brooke found much to interest and please. He had been prepared for row after row of palatial dwellings, and was surprised to find more or less elaborate shops in their stead—great marble or granite structures, palaces in themselves, rising here and there among brown-stone residences done over into marts of retail trade. And many of the corners were given up to towering office buildings.

The roadway was not so crowded with smart equipages as he would have found it later, but touring cars, electric broughams and motor delivery wagons were continually passing, as were hansom cabs, omnibuses, and now and then a victoria or landaulet drawn by sleek, spirited, high-stepping horses, with glinting

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harness, driven by dapper, liveried coachmen, with accompanying grooms of similar accouterment.

And the prosperous, well-dressed pedestrians that he met or overtook were so largely in the majority that it seemed to him New York must be indeed a city of universal affluence. The men all appeared to wear an aura of happy well-being, and the women to possess the secret of eternal youth and loveliness; for elderly women and homely women were so few as to be remarkable.

At Fifty-ninth Street he crossed the plaza and entered the Park, reveling in the fresh, vivid green of grass and foliage, which brought grateful relief after the bare glare of the avenue. The broad drive-ways were well-nigh deserted. Only a great barrel-shaped watering cart passed him at intervals, or a stray hansom cab. Now and then through the leafage there came to him the patter of horse's hoofs on soft turf, and he caught sight for an instant, off to his left, of an equestrian cantering along a bridle path. It was all very restful, and presently he found a bench to sit upon, where he could enjoy the peace and comparative solitude of this sylvan environment.

At times the place was very still. The watering cart no longer passed, and the stray hansoms had

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lengthened their intervals. Only the twitter of birds in the branches overhead punctuated the hush of his retreat. Thus ensconced, Brooke fell to dreaming again. There was much in his recent experiences to afford material, and about the happenings of the past two days he wove a thousand fancies.

He smiled at the thought of his uncle coming from Boston to claim the body of the passenger who had fallen from the Empire State Express, and wondered as to the basis of his proposed identification. His conscience was not altogether clear about this. It was, he supposed, his duty to prevent this error on his uncle's part. He should declare himself, and let the authorities search for the real relatives or friends of the dead man, but in that event, in order to make the matter clear, he must explain the exchange of kit bags, and this would raise a very perilous question. It might be suspected that he had thrown the custodian of the fortune from the train in order to get possession of his money, and then had become frightened and so made this tardy explanation. And as he realized how incriminating the circumstances would appear, should he pursue this course, he realized, too, how even more incriminating they would be should he keep silent and yet be discovered.

Until this moment he had not thought of that. The

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possession of the money had for a time warped his reasoning. It had come upon him so suddenly, and been followed by such an amazing combination of circumstances—the finding of his own bag by the railroad porter, the conclusion that he had been killed, the coming of his uncle to claim the remains—that the practical common-sense view of the possibilities arising from keeping silent had escaped him altogether. In his heart he had meant to be honest. He had never harbored an idea of spending a cent of that money. His one and only impulse was to find the real owner for it—to find him unaided, if possible, for very fear that should he share his secret some of the money might be diverted by less conscientious persons than himself into channels in which it did not belong.

But now he saw his danger. Big and dour and threatening it loomed before him. And as he thought it all out, he became convinced that there was but one course to pursue—he must tell the whole truth. He must find his uncle and lay the facts before him. His uncle would be able to advise him. Already too much time had been lost.

He got to his feet, determined to use all expedition now. And then he paused, asking himself whither he was going. The morgue was the most likely place.

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But he had not the slightest idea as to the morgue's location. In an approaching hansom, however, he seemed to see the solution of his problem. As it came nearer he raised his hand.

"Hi there!" he shouted, and the driver drew in to the path.

But just at that moment a shrill scream cut startlingly across the peaceful quiet of the Park. It was a woman's cry of sudden stricken panic-fright, and it came from the masked bridle path just back of where Brooke was standing.

Instantly he turned, and darting across the little open stretch of sward ducked in under the screening line of shrubs and bushes and stood on the soft earth of the narrow trail, glancing in eager search from right to left. For a moment all that rewarded him was a glimpse of a horse just disappearing around a curve in the path in the direction of Fifty-ninth Street. But a second later, as he took two or three involuntary steps in impulse of pursuit, he saw that which caused him to pause abruptly.

At the side of the path, close under a white lilac bush in full bloom, lay a young woman, her upturned face as pale as the sprays of bloom which drooped above her, her eyelids closed, her form motionless, inert.

CHAPTER V

TRAGI-COMEDY

KNEELING beside the unconscious girl, Brooke stared for a moment in sudden palsied amazement, while focused before his mental vision recurred the scene of two nights ago in the little Indiana farmhouse kitchen. Here, under his gaze, fainting and pallid, lay, if not the identical goddess of his dreams whom he had rescued from the wrecked and overturned Pullman, then certainly her perfect counterpart in every feature of face and figure. The strange, almost weird, singularity of the coincidence startled and almost stunned him for an instant, causing him to question his sight and his reason. For just a breath he fancied himself asleep and a-dream. It was not within the limits of reason that for a second time within forty-eight hours this fairest flower of womanhood should be practically thrown into his succoring arms. He dug his clenched fist into his eyes, shook his head as if to cast off any enveloping illusion, and stared again at the pale face and prostrate form.

At that second the bushes behind him parted and

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he was joined by the cabman, who had followed in somewhat leisurely fashion to aid in investigating the cause of the outcry which had so startlingly awakened the echoes of the silent Park.

"Thrown!" Brooke informed the newcomer.

The cabman stooped down, squatting on his toes.

"Hurled!" It was half question, half assertion.

Brooke took the young woman's wrist and stripped away her gauntlet until his fingers rested on her pulse.

"More frightened than hurt, I fancy," he declared.

"The turf is soft. Her hat saved her head in a measure, too. Is there any water about here?"

Cabby stood up and wrenched at his hip pocket.

"Better'n water," he said laconically, producing a half-pint brown glass flask.

Already Brooke had snatched off the other gauntlet and was chafing and slapping the girl's palms alternately.

"Give me that," he commanded, reaching for the flask. He poured a little of the contents into his hand and began bathing her pale temples, and with a single saturated finger touching her roseleaf upper lip and her thin, sensitive nostrils.

Almost instantly she stirred. He saw her eyelids quiver. Then she breathed deeply, and her eyes

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opened—eyes that reflected the serene turquoise of the sky above her.

Brooke placed the flask at her mouth, and with his other hand gently raised her head.

“Swallow!” he insisted, and in trying to obey she fell to coughing, half choking over the fiery potency of the liquor.

“Fine!” he exclaimed, smiling. “You’re all right now.”

She sat up and looked about her, still dazed, but apparently unharmed. Then her hand went to her temple, and for the first time Brooke observed, half screened by the spun gold of her hair, a cruel red mark, made plain now by the restored circulation. Instinctively his eyes searched for the stone on which he fancied she must have fallen; but even as he looked she undeceived him.

“I was struck!” she said briefly, with sudden startled agitation.

“Struck?” he queried.

“Yes,” she explained. “I can hardly realize it yet. He struck me with his fist.” The words came in a nervous, hysterical gust.

Brooke’s face was still a question, but the girl, catching sight of the cabman for the first time, volunteered no further information.

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"You—you are very good," she said. "It is fortunate—you were near, I suppose!" The fingers of one hand were playing nervously with the fingers of the other.

The cabman interposed.

"We hear you scream, lady," he volunteered.

Brooke handed him back his flask.

"It's well you had that," he said, smiling.

"I allus carries me 'medicine chest wid me," he returned, jocosely.

"And now," Brooke continued, "you can be of further service to the lady." Turning to her, he added: "This man's cab is within a few steps, when you feel quite able."

The sound of approaching hoof-beats inspired her with recovered energy, and she made as if to rise. Brooke offered his hand, glancing as he did so down the bridle path.

A mounted policeman was approaching.

Availing herself of her restorer's assistance, she got quickly upon her feet, nervously shook out her brown habit and paused for a moment in question.

"This way, lady," instructed the cabman, lifting a drooping branch of the lilac bush that she might pass under.

Brooke was about to follow when he caught sight

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of a gold card case she had evidently dropped. He stooped to recover it, just as the policeman drew rein in the narrow path.

"What's the trouble?" asked the officer.

Already the young woman and the cabman were on the other side of the screen of shrubbery. For just a heart beat Brooke hesitated in indecision. No, he told himself, she must not be subjected to the notoriety of police interference. If the aid of the law was to be invoked it could be appealed to later.

"No trouble," he answered, with an air of convincing frankness; and then queried, in turn: "Why?"

"I didn't know," the policeman returned. "I just passed a fellow down here leading a horse with a side saddle, and I thought I saw a lady here."

Brooke shook his head negatively. So she had been riding with a man, and the man—forgive the term!—had struck her. That was clear enough now. It was not for him, though, to make the fact public without her consent. He walked a few reassuring steps beside the mounted policeman. Then, finding a convenient opening between the shrubs, wedged his way through with a "Good day, officer!"

The cab horse had been munching grass along the border of the walk which skirted the driveway, but

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when Brooke reached the spot, the cabman, climbing to his seat, had jerked the head of the luxuriating animal upward and was awaiting orders.

The girl stood on the cab step, trim and smart and irresistibly attractive, despite her recent trying experience. But her pallor was only slightly lessened.

Brooke raised his hat. No, it was not she of the railroad accident. The resemblance, however, was most striking, and he marveled that two women could be so alike.

"You are quite sure you are all right?" he asked solicitously. "If you will permit me, I shall be only too glad to see you to your destination."

"I am afraid," she returned, "that I may be taking you out of your way."

The young man laughed lightly. "I assure you, no," he said, "I have no pressing engagements." For, at the moment, he had quite forgotten his resolution to seek his uncle.

It had always been like this with him. He was a creature of impulse, swayed by the present, unmindful often of responsibilities, a child of the hour, floating with the wind of chance happening. "Besides," he added, "I may be of service, perhaps, if you care to make use of me. Something has occurred, I am sure, which needs righting."

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Brooke was not above medium height, but broad of shoulder and slim waisted, clean-cut, lean and muscular. His figure denoted both strength and agility, just as his face, poetic about the brow and eyes, combined with the sentiment there made manifest, the sturdy, forceful practicality of square jaw and jutting chin.

The girl read all this in her quick survey of him. She read, too, the inherent honesty in his brown eyes and the tender sympathy of his fine sensitive curl of lip. Utter stranger though he was, she felt that he was a man who could be trusted, and of such she was just now in dire need.

"You are more than kind," she said at length. "If it is not imposing upon you, I—oh, dear," she broke off, "I don't know: I don't know."

Waiting for no further consent, Brooke, placing his hand beneath her elbow, half lifted her into the hansom, and immediately followed.

"Where to, sir?"

Cabby was calling down through the trap.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I—I hardly know. I don't want to go to—" And there she checked herself.

"Drive on!" Brooke directed. "Anywhere; just keep going; the lady will tell you later." And

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Cabby, wheeling about, jogged further into the leafy recesses of the Park, following the winding drives, climbing slopes, descending into cool ravines; and all the while his two passengers chattered more and more freely, the girl's agitation gradually subsiding with the telling of her story; the man's self-possession increasing with every confidence vouchsafed him.

And, as their intimacy grew, Brooke contrasted his free-flowing speech of to-day with his stubborn taciturnity of two nights gone with that other girl of whom this one beside him was an almost perfect replica. Then he had sat awed and seemingly abashed, tongue-tied and faltering of utterance through sheer excess of emotion. Now he was ready-worded, alert, keen of understanding and quickly responsive, their intercourse unbarred by any surging sentiment on his part; fostered rather by an inexplicable mutual good fellowship.

"I am trusting you absolutely," the girl was saying, truth shining in the sapphire depths of her eyes, "though I never saw you until fifteen minutes ago. I am trusting you because I feel I can trust you; though, goodness knows, I've been taught a lesson about putting trust in men. But just now I simply must trust somebody, and of all the men I know in

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New York there isn't one I feel like going to. It's very humiliating to have to confess that you've made a great big awful mistake, isn't it?"

Her ingenuousness was delightful. Brooke felt that he had a very beautiful child in charge—a child who had been naughty, and had been punished, and was ready now to philosophize about her naughtiness and determine how best to make amends.

"You can be entirely sure of one thing, so far as I am concerned," he assured her, "and that is that your confidences will not go beyond me. I haven't a friend in all this great city to tell them to, even if I were so inclined."

She drew the gauntlet from her left hand and held up her pink-tipped taper second finger, on which glistened a plain gold band.

"You see?" she asked naïvely.

"Married," Brooke translated.

She nodded demurely, and again her likeness to a naughty child occurred to him.

"It looks very new," he suggested.

"It is," she replied. "It's only been on there—What time is it now?"

He drew out his watch.

"Twenty minutes after two."

"I was married at noon," she told him.

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His brow knitted, and she took it for a sign of incredulity.

"Really," she asseverated. "It does sound unbelievable though, doesn't it?"

"Not unbelievable, but rather mystifying, I must admit."

"My husband has left me," she continued matter-of-factly.

"I see," returned Brooke, "though I am at a loss to understand how he could be so thankless."

Suddenly her agitation returned. Her fingers twined and untwined. Her lids fluttered. Her lip trembled.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with abrupt bitterness, "it all came so suddenly I can hardly realize it, and I have always seen the funny side of things first; but this—this is terrible. It isn't comedy at all—it's tragedy—heavy, heavy tragedy."

Brooke cast about for something consoling.

"He'll come back," he ventured. "He's sure to."

"Come back!" she repeated in dread tone. "Oh, no! He won't dare. He wouldn't dare, would he?"

"I don't know. I should think he would. Why not?"

"Because—" she hesitated. "Oh, no, he wouldn't dare. He struck me." Her hand went to her temple again. "And he robbed me," she concluded.

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"Robbed you!" His amazement echoed in his voice. "Two hours married and he struck and robbed you?"

For the first time he saw that her lashes were wet. A tear trembled on her cheek.

"Isn't it mortifying?" she asked, making a brave effort to smile. "I couldn't tell anyone but a total stranger, like you."

"The brute!" Brooke commented in a murmur.

For a little moment she was silent. Then she dabbed at her eyes with a filmy speck of a handkerchief.

"There isn't much fun in discovering you are a fool when it's too late, is there?" she asked, contrition in her voice. "I've always been self-willed and rather a madcap, and this is what it's done for me."

Brooke was burning to ask questions, but he recognized it would not be gentlemanly to pry into such eminently personal affairs.

"There is some sort of a saying about spilled milk," he commented, non-committally.

"Romance!" she exclaimed, still contrite. "That was my fetich. Common sense is a more reliable object of devotion. But it is a pity I should learn the lesson only at such a cost."

Her companion made no rejoinder, and observing

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his silence she turned her now serious eyes upon him.

"I'm rattling on," she said, "just as if you knew it all. It's a shame to keep you in the dark, after you have been so kind and sympathetic. Indeed I don't know what I should have done if I had been found there in the bridle path by the police, and the whole thing got to the public. It's bad enough as it is, but that would have been just the last straw."

"I am sure I don't wish to know anything that you would regret having told me," Brooke made plain. "But if it will help you to tell it to me, or if I can be of any service because of knowing it, then I'll gladly listen."

She folded her small, dainty, shapely hands, one gloved and one bare, upon her lap, and sat up a little stiffly, her gaze fixed rigidly between the ears of the jogging cab horse.

"Listen," she said, with a charmingly unfamiliar sternness. "It's not a very new story—the first of it, at least. It's the old one of a girl falling in love—no, not that, either—of a girl becoming infatuated—yes, that's better—with her riding master. It happened this time that the riding master posed as an English Honorable, the son of a Baron, and that the girl was fool enough to think that because of that he must be better than an everyday mister." She

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paused for just a breath, and then turned, suddenly, to face Brooke once more. "It's marvelous," she interjected, "how wisely philosophical I've grown in the last half hour, isn't it?"

He smiled approvingly, and she went on:

"Well, he and she used to ride a lot together in the Park here, and he made love very deliciously, and the poor girl's head was turned more or less completely. Then she went West with her father and sister, and was away for five months, and all the while the riding master wrote to her, avowing his deathless devotion and begging her to come on and make him endlessly happy. And at last, on some flimsy pretext, that her father, or at any rate her sister, should have seen through, but didn't, she came to New York, accompanied only by her maid, went to a hotel, 'phoned her riding master, and the next day—that is to-day, at high noon—he and she were united in the holy bonds of wedlock in the rectory of the Little Church Around the Corner."

She paused now for breath, but her gaze remained fixed in the vicinity of the ears of the faithful cab horse. Brooke, leaning back in his corner, was still all attention.

"Romantically minded, as usual," she continued, "the bride proposed a most appropriate post-wedding

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diversion, a horseback ride to Claremont for the wedding breakfast. Need I say, however, that the breakfast was scarcely the blissful event that she had foreseen? On the contrary, it was most painful. The bridegroom, overcome by the prospect of this speedy culmination of his long-delayed hopes, had chosen prior to the ceremony to indulge with unwise abandon in the cup which inebriates as well as cheers, and it needed only the wine which he liberally ordered at the wedding breakfast to change his humor from that assumed one of the tender, loving swain to the real, mercenary, self-seeking, acquisitive fortune hunter. *In vino veritas.* The mask was dropped and disillusion began."

Again she paused. It seemed that she had nerved herself to the recital, but the recalling of this trying episode of the breakfast proved for the moment too much for her tensed nerves, and she sank back now in the cab, sobbing softly.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Brooke sympathized. "I wouldn't have had you tell me if I'd thought for a moment——"

"Never mind," she interrupted, making a brave effort to recover her nonchalant gayety. "But it was rather a facer, you know. However, that's about all of it. He wanted money then and there, and when

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I told him I had none, and that my father would be sure to disinherit me for what I had done, he became more and more nasty."

"But you say he robbed you," Brooke prompted.

"Yes," she returned courageously. "I was wearing a string of pearls, simply because I was afraid to leave them at the hotel. He tore them from my neck, and then struck me. You know the rest."

Brooke was at a loss what to suggest. It was a very delicate situation, and he realized it. The man was her husband; secretly as yet, it was true, but any attempt to apprehend him for his crime would be to precipitate the publicity which she wished above all things to avoid.

"The pearls were valuable, I presume," he ventured tentatively.

"Twenty thousand dollars papa paid for them," she answered, in a tone so casual that it gave Brooke a very fair notion of papa's affluence.

"I don't suppose," he went on, "that it would be possible to recover them without exposing the whole affair."

"Oh, no," she hastened to make answer, "it wouldn't; and I wouldn't have this come out in the papers for twenty strings of pearls."

"How about a discreet private detective agency?"

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It seems a shame that he should be permitted to get away with that necklace."

But still she objected.

"Not now, at all events," she pleaded. "I suppose I must make a clean breast of it all to papa, but he won't be here for a week, and by that time—Well, I'm rather under the impression that Mr. Mumford will be——"

"Mr. Mumford!" Brooke exclaimed, lighted by a sudden recollection. "Is that the fellow's name?"

She glanced at him apprehensively, something like terror in her blue eyes.

"You don't know him?" she queried.

"I told you," he answered calmly, "that I know no one in New York. But the name! I saw it to-day. There must be dozens of Mumfords, here, though. Have you any idea where he lives?"

She pursed her lips thoughtfully.

"I always wrote to him at an address down town, but before I went West he lived up in the Hundreds somewhere. I think it was One Hundred and Third Street."

Involuntarily Brooke whistled.

"You *do* know him!" she exclaimed, startled.

"I give you my word I don't," he returned; "but

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I'm going to do what I can to get that necklace for you, and I'll promise you there'll be no publicity."

The cab had circled the Park, and at that moment Brooke, glancing out to the right, caught sight of a sign reading "The Casino." At the same instant he drew his watch from his pocket. The hands were on the stroke of three.

"Do you mind coming in here, only for a moment?" he asked. "I've just thought of an important matter I must telephone about."

CHAPTER VI

CROSS PURPOSES

THE name, the address and the telephone number appended to the letter which had come into Brooke's hands at the luncheon table had clung, by some curious fatality, with unusual tenacity to his memory. He was quite certain the letter was not for him; yet as "John Moore, of Chicago," he assuredly had a perfect right to the ostensible assumption that he was the person addressed, and, so assuming, he was in all decency bound to respond. Nevertheless, had it not been for the odd coincidence of name and street just revealed to him he would have chosen to ignore the communication or, what was quite as likely, have entirely forgotten it.

Now, when he had given the number to the telephone operator and stood waiting his assignment to a booth, there was borne in upon him a sense of impending adventure, not unmixed with danger, connected with this rather quixotic and, as he was bound to admit, entirely unnecessary interference with an affair in which he really had no personal concern.

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"Three," said the girl at the switchboard, nodding to him, and Brooke edged into the narrow confines of the booth.

"Is Mrs. Mumford there?" he called, his lips at the transmitter, the receiver held to his ear.

A not unpleasant voice of distinctly English intonation answered:

"Yes. This is Mrs. Mumford."

"This is Mr. Moore speaking," said Brooke boldly. "You were good enough to invite me——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted the voice at the other end, with a pleased ring of delighted surprise, "I'm so glad to hear from you, Mr. Moore. You're coming up to dine, aren't you?"

"Why, you see," Brooke returned, with a brave effort at dissemblance, "I'm so puzzled that I don't believe I should sleep to-night unless I solved the problem. How in Heaven's name you knew I'd be at the Waldorf-Astoria to-day is beyond my powers of comprehension. Even my Chicago friends"—and he smiled to himself as he mentioned these mythical persons—"could not have known that."

He heard her laugh. Then she said:

"Come up and get the answer. We dine at six. Our flat is one flight up. Mr. Mumford will be delighted to see you, and——" she paused for just the

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shade of a second, adding rather coyly, Brooke thought: "And so shall I."

The unhappy bride had discreetly preferred to remain in the cab, and there Brooke now rejoined her, smitten by a pang of pity for her in her trouble; she was so young and fragile and so delicately lovely with her roseleaf skin and sapphire eyes and hair of finest spun gold.

"Do tell me what you have been doing," she implored anxiously. "I have been so worried. Suppose you should be a newspaper reporter, and have telephoned all I told you down to your paper!"

The hurt of her words was instantly reflected in the young man's all-too-expressive face. Seeing which she hastened to make amends.

"Oh, that *was* cruel, wasn't it? No, no, I didn't mean it. But after such betrayal as has been mine to-day you can hardly find fault with me, now, can you?"

He simply smiled his forgiveness. No, it was not fair to blame her. As it was, she had been most ingenuously confiding.

Meanwhile the cabman was driving still aimlessly, but in the direction of the Fifth Avenue entrance.

"Have you decided yet where you will go?" Brooke asked presently. "This is very pleasant, and

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I don't want to hurry you, but there is a very perceptible increase in the number of vehicles in the Park just now, and you are liable, perhaps, to meet some friends, and— But you know best," he added, having thought it wise to suggest her lack of convention in driving about in a hansom cab, clad in a riding-habit and brown Derby, beside a young man who was an utter stranger to her.

She complimented him on his kind thoughtfulness.

"I really don't know what I should have done without you," she repeated. "You have been a friend in need, certainly. Yes, I suppose I must go somewhere. I'll tell you—I'll go to the Saint Regis. They know me there, and I'll be safe from annoyance. I don't suppose he would dare to look me up, but he might if I went back to the Hotel Astor, where I stopped last night."

Brooke turned upon her rather sharply. When he spoke he was smiling.

"That's funny," he said, "I was at the Hotel Astor last night, too."

"Were you?" she asked unthinkingly. "I hope they didn't try to drown you as they did me."

For an instant Brooke was dumb with a new surprise. When he recovered his speech he was impelled to laughter, but he restrained the impulse.

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"Somebody let a bath tub overflow in a room over my head, and the water came down in a shower," she went on. "I was nearly drenched."

The impulse strengthened, but he fought it to victory. Then up went his hand through the trap in the roof.

"Driver," he called, "the Saint Regis!" And then, as the trap fell, he added in a lower tone, quite sure that only she would hear: "Miss Colby wishes to stop there."

Excitedly she turned upon him at the words, her little hand clutching his arm.

"Oh, oh, oh!" she exclaimed. "How *did* you know?"

He smiled with momentary pleasure at her mystification as he murmured, under his breath: "There's no doubt about the color of her eyes. Blue wins."

"How *did* you know?" she repeated.

He leaned close to her, as if it were a weighty secret he had to divulge.

"If you'll promise not to hold it against me," he bargained, "I'll tell you."

"I promise," breathlessly.

"Well, then, it was my tub that overflowed."

Her eyes widened in amused amazement.

CROSS PURPOSES

"Not really?"

"Really. The porter told me that I had nearly taken the life of the daughter of the President of the Candy Trust by my carelessness." Now he was laughing boisterously.

"I never heard of anything so curious," she averred, joining the rippling music of her laughter with his noisy guffawing. "Now you can apologize," she declared, when they paused for breath.

"Most humbly I beg your pardon," he pleaded, with mock ceremony.

"On one condition I grant it," she returned banteringly. "Now that you know my name, you shall tell me yours."

"Only too gladly. Unfortunately, I haven't a card, but it isn't difficult to remember: John Moore."

Again her eyes widened; this time with perplexed surprise.

"Not John Moore, of Chicago?" she queried.

"John Moore, of Chicago," he repeated, wondering what new complication was to follow.

In her ensuing burst of merriment there was nothing to indicate the least consciousness of her being a tragically disillusioned bride. Brooke, however, more than ever impressed by the evanescence of her

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youthful emotions, was swept by a wave of bitterest resentment against the brutish nature that could figuratively, much less actually, raise a hand to crush such a perfect flower as this guileless happy child beside him.

This surge of resentment disconcerted him for the moment, and he forgot, in the stress of it, to wonder why she was laughing. But suddenly she recalled him.

"John Moore, of Chicago!" she echoed, in a lull of her laughter. "Why, of all odd things this is the oddest. To think I should meet you in this way! And you are not the least bit like what I expected. I imagined you much taller, and not so dark—though I might have known what the sun in the Philippines would do."

Brooke was smiling in sympathy with her gay humor, though he had not the ghost of a notion what she was talking about. His smile encouraged her to go on.

"Oh, it's so funny! And I have the best of you now, because you don't know—you can't even guess—who I am. Why——"

"But I do know," Brooke interrupted. "You're Mrs. Somebody Mumford, *née* Colby, the daughter of——"

CROSS PURPOSES

Even this reference to her unfortunate wedded condition, however, put no check on her gayety.

"Oh, that's too good," she cried, with fresh laughter; "that's really delicious. You haven't the faintest notion."

"But you are, aren't you?" with offended insistence.

She shook her head spiritedly.

"Not to you," she answered. "I'm somebody—oh, somebody altogether different to you. We've known each other after a fashion—or rather we did know each other after a fashion—for a whole long year. Do you know that?"

Brooke's face was an utter blank, but she misinterpreted it. She expected him to be mystified; therefore, it was quite natural for him to stare at her vacantly. But she failed to plummet the infinite depth of his mystification, not knowing, of course, that he had never answered to the name of "John Moore" until that very morning.

"I'll give you a hint," she smiled, relenting. "Just a wee, little bit of a hint, *Jackie Boy*."

But Brooke's face showed no appreciation.

"No?" she queried, raising a slim, reproachful finger. "That suggests nothing? There were others then. That wasn't really truly my ownly own, eh?"

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"We are certainly playing at cross-purposes," the young man interposed seriously. "There must surely be another John Moore of Chicago." He was on the verge of telling her he had reached that conclusion some hours ago, but on second thought decided not to.

"Of course there may be another," she admitted, ignoring his serious tone; "there may be a dozen others for all I know, but I'm quite convinced that you are *the* one."

"But I'm not," Brooke declared, with emphasis. "On my honor, I'm not. I can't explain to you why, exactly, but I'm sure I am not."

"I'll convince you you are," she said coyly, her head on one side. "I'm sure I can convince you."

"And I'm sure you can't," he persisted. "It's an impossibility."

Then she pretended to have taken offense. There was just a faint suspicion of a pout about her sensitive lower lip.

"You don't want to be convinced," she charged. For a moment she was silent. Then she asked: "You know the Malmseys, and the Leitners and the Paddocks, of Chicago, don't you?"

He shook his head. "Not even by name," he said.

"Not Nan Paddock?"

"No."

CROSS PURPOSES

She turned her face away from him, and looking out of the window noticed for the first time that they were within half a block of the hotel.

"You don't play fair," she accused. "You deny knowing Nan Paddock just to tease me. You'd deny ever having been in the Philippines, too, I suppose, if I asked you."

"Then don't ask me," he suggested.

"I'm not going to. But there is one thing you won't deny," she declared, her cheeks flaming. "There's one name you can't say you never heard."

"Is there?" His tone was docility itself.

"Yes, sir, there is. I'm going to tell it to you, just as I get out of the cab, and you'll want to rush after me and apologize and ask me a hundred questions, but you will not be permitted to do so, for I forbid you to leave this hansom. I must go into the hotel absolutely alone. That is to be your punishment."

As she spoke the cab swung around the corner into Fifty-fifth Street, and drew up, an instant later, before the imposing Saint Regis entrance.

"But I may see you again?" Brooke urged. "Even if I can't get out now."

"I shall consider it," the girl answered, with an

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assumption of gravity that was charming. "You have misbehaved, and must be disciplined."

"If I bring back the pearls," he pleaded, "may I make peace in that way?" He was standing now, his hand outstretched to assist her.

She paused for just a moment on the step of the hansom, half turning, her flushed face uplifted, her eyes resting in his, and a mischievous smile hovering about her whimsical mouth.

"All will be forgiven," she said softly, "if you bring back the pearls, Jackie Boy, to *Peaches*."

And without waiting for a word or smile, or even fleeting expression, she stepped lightly to the sidewalk, tripped gracefully up the marble entrance steps and disappeared before a bowing porter into the gloom of the hotel corridor.

And Brooke, after a muttered "Waldorf-Astoria" to the cabman, dropped back once more into his corner of the cab, where, with brow drawn into wrinkles of perplexity, he made energetic but vain endeavor, throughout the entire course of his journey down the avenue, to imagine just what this "Jackie Boy" and "Peaches" business could possibly signify.

CHAPTER VII

DÎNER À DEUX

THE house on West 103rd Street, at which Brooke presented himself at exactly ten minutes before six o'clock, was a small but rather ornate building, with a rough red stone first story and a variegated brick superstructure. From the sidewalk it had the appearance of a private residence of a single family, but once the visitor had mounted the ruddy stone stoop with its elaborately chiseled balustrade, and had entered the vestibule through the heavy beveled plate-glass doors, the row of shining brass and glass letter boxes, each with its push-button, and its framed *carte-de-visite* told the story of multiple occupancy.

Brooke bent his head to a study of the names here presented, and second in line found that which he sought. The push-button invited, and his forefinger bore upon it.

Then he waited, momentarily expecting a white-capped maid to swing open the inner door for his admittance. But the only answer to his ring was a nervous clicking of the door-latch, while the door

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itself stood forbiddingly closed before him. Again he pushed the button, and again the latch clicked, long and persistently this time; so long, indeed, that thinking maybe a child was endeavoring unsuccessfully to turn the knob from within, he volunteered assistance, to find himself admitted to an empty hallway, at the foot of an ascending flight of red-carpeted stairs.

What for an instant had seemed a miracle his reason now cleared. It was his first experience with the electric latch-lifter; and as he climbed to the upper floor the novelty of the mechanism was uppermost in his thoughts.

The white-capped maid that he had expected below stairs met him in response to his ring at the door of the Mumford apartment, and showed him in through the tiny, box-like hall of the flat to a miniature and somewhat garishly furnished drawing-room, which looked upon the street.

Brooke, with a sense of unrequiting hospitality should he stare with rudely critical eyes at the in-harmonious furniture and decoration, strode over to a window and gave his attention to the houses opposite. He was thus engaged when a rustle of silk in the passage announced the coming of his hostess, and, not without some misgiving lest his deception

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be detected—for it was just possible that the real John Moore was known to the lady, by sight, at least—he turned to face her.

The tableaux which confronted him he compared involuntarily to an Oahu sunset. Mrs. Mumford stood in the doorway, between tinsel threaded portières of vivid crimson. Her hair—and there were fluffy quantities of it—held the dazzling glow of burnished copper; her face, in spite of an obvious application of powder, was brilliantly florid, and her generous figure, clad in shimmering pale lavender satin, supplied a semblance to that effective contrast which Nature provides for her spectacles by means of prismatic clouds.

But only for an instant did the visitor hold this ungracious comparison in mind, for as she stepped forward with outstretched jeweled hand, the hearty cordiality of the extended welcome was sufficiently winning to dispel, momentarily at least, anything approaching unkind criticism.

If Mrs. Mumford's appearance had been for the instant disillusioning, her voice, rich, full and deliciously melodious, coupled with the charm of well-bred English intonation and accent, was sufficient to cause her caller to forget his first disparaging impression.

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"This is so good of you, Mr. Moore," she was saying. "So awfully good of you; for, after all, we are really utter strangers to you. But we are Chicago people, and we make it a point to keep open house here for Chicagoans when they come to New York."

"The obligation, it seems to me," Brooke returned, gallantly, "is all on my side. It is awfully good of you to entertain me, a stranger, Mrs. Mumford."

She smiled and he noted that her teeth were one of her best features.

"Oh, we don't ask everybody," she hastened to make clear. "We know something of you, Mr. Moore. As I wrote you, I think, we have mutual friends."

She placed a gilded chair for him, and, as he stood beside it, she chose a place for herself on an old rose and gold upholstered sofa at his right hand:

"You could never fancy, I suppose, who those mutual friends are?" she propounded.

Brooke realized now that he must move with the utmost caution. The whole affair was very much of a puzzle to him. He knew that he was not the John Moore who was expected. That was probably the John Moore who was known to Miss Colby as

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"Jackie Boy." But if he was to learn anything of the Mumford who lived here, and whom he strongly suspected of having that day committed bigamy, he must play his part so well that no suspicion would attach to him as a counterfeit.

"I could fancy any number of persons," he ventured in reply, "and probably not hit on the right ones."

"Try," she suggested, coaxingly.

The names that Miss Colby had given him were still fresh in his memory.

"The Malmseys, for instance," he said, boldly.

His hostess smiled an inscrutable smile. Whether it meant he was right or wrong Brooke, for the life of him, could not determine.

"Am I right?" he asked.

Still she smiled.

"Do you think it likely?" she queried in turn.

"Possible."

"Try again," she urged.

"The Leitners, maybe."

She shook her head.

He was at the end of his rope now, but he let go without a quaver. "Miss Paddock, perhaps?"

Once more Mrs. Mumford donned a sphinx-like expression.

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"Yes?" he questioned.

"I'm not going to tell you," she replied, teasingly. "At least not just now. Unless I can feel sure you'll end up by being grateful to these mutual friends for having thrown you into our society, I shall not tell you at all. It wouldn't be nice to have you go back to Chicago blaming them for a stupid evening."

"I'll promise not to do that."

"One can never tell," she insisted, blithely. "I'm a fairly good judge, though, and if when you leave us I believe you have enjoyed yourself, I'll tell you whom you may thank. That's fair, isn't it, Mr. Moore?"

"Mr. Moore" bowed his approval. As a matter of fact he was very glad to have got off so easily. What if she had questioned him about these mutual friends? After all, Fortune was working into his hands.

At that moment a bell rang—a long, vibrant, tinnabulation.

"The 'phone," said Mrs. Mumford, quietly, as she rose. "You'll excuse me, won't you?" and she swept with rustling skirts into the passage.

In a minute she was back.

"I'm so sorry," she began. "Mr. Mumford has

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been detained down town by business. He can't be home for dinner. So you and I, Mr. Moore, will be forced to a *dîner à deux*."

Brooke, who had risen, bowed with assumed gallantry, masking his disappointment. It was to meet Mumford that he had come.

"It will be charming," he said.

"Mr. Mumford hopes to be home before you go," the wife added. "He begged me to offer you his apologies."

Once more Brooke bowed.

Again a bell sounded; but Mrs. Mumford, who had resumed her place on the sofa, sat still. She saw the question in her visitor's eyes, however.

"That's the street door bell," she explained.

"Aren't they confusing?" he asked, in an effort to make conversation. And then he related his experience at the door, and his failure at first to respond to the clicking of the latch.

"You're not used to calling on flat dwellers," she laughed, amused at his recital.

Later, when they were in the dining-room, before taking their places at table, she showed him the push-button which released the inner street door.

"It's so odd you never saw that sort of thing before," she commented, and Brooke, realizing that

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he had stumbled in his part, devoted his conversation at dinner to mention of such sights and scenes as had impressed him most during his brief stay in the Windy City, clothing each with as much of an atmosphere of familiarity as he was able to command.

But, gradually, as he rattled on, he became conscious that his entertainer failed to respond with any degree of certainty concerning the streets or the buildings to which he made allusion. There was a tendency on her part to generalize which awakened in his mind a question as to whether she knew even the little about Chicago that he did himself.

"How long has it been," he asked, when the salad and cheese were before him, "since you left Chicago, Mrs. Mumford?"

"Two years," she answered, unflinching.

"You lived there long?"

"Oh, yes; I went there when quite a kiddy."

Brooke marveled that her English should so long have continued pure and undefiled.

"Did I understand that you lived on the North Side?" Following his short acquaintance with the city, this geographical denomination had lingered, but the term was evidently not familiar to Mrs. Mumford, which puzzled him.



"DON'T YOU LIKE THE WINE, MR. MOORE?"

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"My memory for names is wretched," she excused herself. "I can't recall the street. It may have been North. I'll have to ask Mr. Mumford."

Brooke had been served with a Bronx cocktail as an *apéritif*. Now he was drinking, very temperately, be it said, an odd-tasting champagne, which instead of being poured at the table was brought in in glasses by the maid, a fresh glass being provided when the wine in the one in use lowered. The peculiar taste of the vintage, coupled with this odd method of serving it, and both considered in conjunction with his hostess's singular lack of knowledge regarding the city in which she had been, by her own statement, reared from childhood, aroused a sudden distrust in the visitor's mind.

In vain he endeavored to think of what the flavor of the wine reminded him. It had a medicinal tang that was as specifically elusive as it was generically evident. Again and again he tasted it as sparingly as comported with good taste and a desire not to arouse suspicion, searching for the note of resemblance.

"Don't you like the wine, Mr. Moore?" his hostess asked presently, having detected his manner of drinking in spite of his care. "It's a new brand that was recommended to Mr. Mumford—the pure,

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fermented juice of the grape, without any doctoring," she explained. "Can't you taste the grape in it? Take one big swallow, and you'll notice it."

Brooke, partly reassured, obeyed, draining his glass.

"I do observe a difference," he said. And he was quite sure, though he did not tell her, that it was not the grape that made it. For now, even as he spoke, that for which he had been groping revealed itself. A physician had once given him a sedative in which chloral was the chief ingredient. It was of that sedative that the champagne reminded him. Instantly a suspicion, almost a conviction, flashed across his understanding. For some reason or other the big, florid-faced woman, with hair of burnished copper, who sat opposite to him, was plying him with drugged wine.

The maid at that moment brought him another glass.

"I can't say," he added, "that I care for it particularly."

But Mrs. Mumford was evidently not discouraged.

"It's a matter of taste—educated taste, I suppose. I don't like it much myself. Would you prefer some whiskey and water?"

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Brooke politely negatived the suggestion.

"Oh, pray don't bother," he said. "I'm not much of a drinker at any time. I really don't wish anything else."

He was hoping the little that he had drunk would not be sufficient to affect him. Certainly he would drink no more. He wondered whether coffee would serve as an antidote. One thing was certain—he was not alarmed. On the contrary he felt a quiet confidence in himself. After all, he could hardly believe it possible that they meant him any harm. He was sorry that that scoundrel Mumford had not come home. But his wife was really a very charming woman. The sunset in Oahu was not so brilliant now. A haze had lifted from the white stretch of plain before him, and the sun was visible only dimly through the waving, shimmering mist. Now the sun was swaying, back and forth, from side to side. Now it was growing dusk. Now the dusk was slowly deepening to dark. Darker and darker it grew. For just a moment stars shone—myriads of stars. Then, as suddenly as they came, they died, and night—black, pitch night enveloped everything.

A bell was ringing. It seemed to him to have been ringing for years. It rang in low, vibrating,

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insistent peals, with only brief spaces of silence between. If it would only stop for just a little while, so that he might sleep! But instead of stopping it grew louder, and more irritatingly demandful. It had given him a headache. His temples were throbbing now to the measure of its quick, shrill, metallic pulsing. It was outrageous that a civilized community should permit such an outrage. What sort of a place was this, anyhow? Here he was— Then, abruptly, while the bell still sharply trilled its long-drawn vibrant note against his ear drums, Brooke awoke to consciousness.

Back upon him rushed recollection of the dinner; of the peculiar-tasted wine; of the sudden overwhelming lethargy; of the gradually falling darkness, which had swallowed him and his senses.

It was still dark. He stretched his eyes wide and peered into the blackness. Not the smallest ray of light was discernible. He was lying at full length upon what his questioning hands told him was a leather-covered couch.

The ringing he had heard—it now ceased momentarily—was either the telephone bell or the street door bell; he did not know which. He wondered why someone did not answer it. Where was everyone? What was he doing alone here in the dark?

DINER À DEUX

Could it be that he had been drugged? If so, what was the object?

Once more the bell cut into the black silence, and his nerves shrieked with pain. He dropped his feet to the floor and sat up with a start. Then he stood, conscious that his knees were weakly uncertain. He took a step, and a piece of furniture smote him sharply on the shin. The blackness of the room seemed almost tangible.

In his pocket he found a match, and the next instant he had struck it to a flame. A quick glance not only showed him the room in which he had dined, but revealed an electric chandelier at his left hand a little above the level of his head over the dining table. Promptly he switched on the light and the room was flooded. On the mantel shelf the telephone instrument stood. Below it, against the wall, the double bells were sending out their punctured, rolling vibrations.

As he took the receiver from the hook his eyes dwelt for an instant on the couch from which he had risen. It was so close to the seat he had occupied at the table that he might almost have rolled on to it from his chair.

"Hello!" he called, his lips at the mouthpiece.
"Yes, I suppose so. I don't know what this number

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is. . . . Whom do you want? . . . This is Mumford's, yes. . . . What is that? . . . No, I'm not Mr. Mumford. . . . I'm a visitor. . . . Mrs. Mumford appears to have stepped out. . . . A message? Yes, I hear you. . . ."

Brooke's eyes widened, and he caught his breath in sudden surprised excitement. What he heard was this:

"Tell her Mr. Moore called her up. I just found her letter here at the hotel a half hour ago when I came in from Chicago. Sorry I was too late for the dinner, but if——"

"Say! Hello!" Brooke interrupted, suddenly determined. "Just one minute. You don't know these people, do you? . . . I thought not. Well, there's something queer about this place. Where can I see you in three-quarters of an hour? I want your advice. . . . Who am I? . . . Well, my name happens to be the same as yours. . . . I got your letter first, and thought it was a mistake. Afterward I thought maybe it wasn't, and ventured on trying. . . . Yes, I was here to dinner, and went down and out in the middle of it. . . . I suspect it was knockout drops, and I suspect they were meant for you. That's why I want to see you. I'll be straight down there. . . . Yes, I'll ask for you at the desk. . . . Funny? Well, it may be to you,

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but my sense of humor isn't keen enough to appreciate it. Good-bye!"

He hooked the receiver and turned away. Though he fancied the flat was empty since the telephone had rung so long unanswered, he had nevertheless taken the precaution to speak in as low a tone as was consistent with making himself understood. Now he stepped softly across the floor which led to the passage. As he did so the striking of a clock on the mantel behind him startled him, its sudden note jarring on his tense nerves. It struck eleven. It was more than four hours, then, since he had sunk into that dead stupor.

He moved on, cautiously, traversing the long narrow hallway, which was in darkness, save for the faint light from the dining-room at his back. His head was still throbbing unmercifully and his knee joints were not yet quite certain, so that he found it alike difficult to think consecutively and to walk with any degree of confidence.

Reaching the tiny hall vestibule he groped about for the hall stand, and, finding it, groped further for his hat. For a moment it escaped him and he fancied that it had been removed; and then, for the first time, he wondered whether while unconscious he had been robbed. Instinctively his hand went to his waistcoat. His watch and chain were still in place.

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His wallet was in his breast pocket. In his trousers' pockets were bills and small change.

With the finding of these valuables his mystification grew. If it was not to plunder, what was the object of drugging him? And having drugged him, what was the idea of his druggers in leaving him here in the flat, presumably quite alone?

He switched on the electric light in the little vestibule, and his hat stared at him from a peg he had omitted to inspect in his blind search. His walking stick was there, too. And to his growing perplexity there was a second hat as well, and a second walking stick. Yet, if his memory did not deceive him, the hall stand had been quite bare when he arrived that afternoon.

Well, it was not for him to wait to make his *adieux*. He fancied he had got off very fortunately. In three-quarters of an hour he would meet the real John Moore at the Waldorf-Astoria, and together they would endeavor to arrive at a solution of this most mystifying affair.

He turned to the door and twisted the knob. But to his chagrined amazement the door would not open. He pulled and pushed and shook it vigorously, but it held fast. It was locked and he was a prisoner.

CHAPTER VIII

RECOVERY

UP to the moment of finding his escape cut off, Brooke's temper had not risen. A thorough philosopher at heart, he had agreed that in view of his temerity in accepting an invitation obviously not meant for him, he had no right to resent inhospitable treatment. Had he been beaten and robbed he would have viewed the situation with like lenience; thankful, indeed, for the sparing of his life. But to have his exit barred at this stage of the experience was irritating beyond his emotional command, and he glowed suddenly hot with angry resentment.

He found a button in the wall which controlled the hall light, and, pressing it, he illumined the narrow passage from end to end. Then, with hat on head and walking stick in hand, his temper fired with angry indignation, he began a systematic search of the flat for occupants.

The passage ran from the small vestibule at the front, which admitted to the miniature drawing-room, past four closed doors, and ended at the dining-room in the rear.

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At the first of these closed doors Brooke knocked commandingly. But there was no response. He knocked again, still louder, with more insistent force, but with like result. Then, boldly, he turned the knob, and would have entered, but this door also he found locked.

He hastened to the next, pounding upon it with clenched fist. The echo of his knuckles was his only answer. He tried the handle, and the door opened, revealing the small porcelain tub and other accessories of the modest flat bath-room. Within, he discovered a door to the room to which he had first sought entrance, but on trying it he found that it likewise was locked.

As, re-entering the passage, he approached the third door which gave upon it, a sound, low, muffled, but unmistakably proceeding from within, penetrated to his acute hearing. He bent his ear and listened. What he had heard was a man's stertorous breathing. It was easily distinguishable as he leaned close to the keyhole. Well, he must wake him up and demand an explanation. Such outrageous treatment as he had been subjected to should not go unrebuked.

He rapped the door sharply with the head of his stick. There was no answer. The heavy, slumber-

RECOVERY

ous respirations continued without cessation or noticeable change of rhythm. Again Brooke rapped—a long, thundering tattoo this time, calculated to arouse the most insentient. But when, hearing no answering word, he bent his listening ear once more, the breathing had only deepened into a snore.

Without further question, finding the door unlocked, he entered. The room, which was brilliant with the glare from two blazing electric bulbs, was in no little disorder. It was a bedchamber, and stretched diagonally across the bed lay the snoring sleeper, his mouth open, his face a reddish purple from congested blood. His coat and waistcoat lay upon the floor. He wore one shoe only. The other rested upon a chiffonier.

Brooke leaned over the footrail of the bed for a moment studying the creature. He was a youngish man—thirty-five years old at most—tall and spare and sinewy. His hair was sandy, and a short-cropped sandy mustache adorned his lip.

It was not difficult to diagnose his case. He had been drinking heavily, and was very, very drunk. But a question not so easy of answer was whether he had locked the door after him as he came in, or whether those departing had locked it upon him, hoping in this way to enforce his stopping in the

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flat until sleep and abstinence should effect his sobering. For just a moment Brooke wondered whether he, too, might not have been drugged. But a quick survey of the room convinced him that the man was in his own quarters. On a table beside the bed lay an empty whiskey flask; beside it, in a brass bowl, reposed a half-smoked briarwood pipe and a rubber tobacco pouch.

But what thrilled Brooke with conviction, not only that the fellow belonged here, but was indeed the identical person to trace whom he had risked entering a house in which he had no warrant, was a pair of light spurs beside the single shoe upon the maple chiffonier.

At sight of them he started from his leaning attitude on the brass footrail and indulged in a more minute inspection of the tiny chamber. On the wall were three framed photographs. Quickly he glanced from one to another. And now the identification was complete. The central photograph was unmistakably one of Miss Colby. Instinctively he turned again to the sodden bridegroom, and an expression of utter disgust and loathing flitted across his mobile features as he regarded the stupified inert figure. And this was his wedding night!

He wondered what the fellow could have done

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with the pearls. Had he already disposed of them? He would hardly have dared so soon after the theft. If not, it was possible they were still on his person. They might even be in his coat, which lay now at Brooke's feet. Instantly he snatched it up and ran his hands searchingly through the pockets; but, unrewarded, dropped it a moment later. The waistcoat he searched, too, only to meet with a second disappointment.

The fellow was lying on his side. One of his trousers' pockets gaped invitingly, but Brooke shrank from an experiment which, justifiable as it might have been, smacked too strongly of a criminal practice to be put into execution. If the pearls were there he would not disturb them. He dropped to his knees and made a careful search of the floor. Then he opened the drawers of the chiffonier and rummaged amongst shirts and collars and underwear, without success.

And now he suddenly realized that what he had entered the room to obtain had likewise escaped him. He had not yet found the key which could give him release. In furtherance of his quest for this object he began moving about the articles which littered the top of the chiffonier. The spurs he thrust to one side. A soiled handkerchief and a much wilted

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collar he brushed to the floor. He raised a crumpled newspaper, and there beneath it lay a key. It was not very large, but he trusted it was that which he sought.

In his eagerness to lay hold of it, however, his arm turned over the shoe which hitherto had been left undisturbed—turned it over, and sent it dropping with noisy clatter to the carpet.

The man on the bed moved uneasily, and Brooke stooped suddenly over the fallen shoe, so as to be out of sight should he open his eyes. One hand thus went to the floor for additional support for his crouching body, and that one hand touched something cool and consecutively globular. Involuntarily a little “Ah!” escaped him, for instantly he knew. The stolen pearls lay beneath his palm.

The bed creaked as the body upon it rolled over, and the snoring was succeeded by that loud stertorous breathing which Brooke had first heard outside in the passage. Assured now that the creature was once more soundly asleep, the invader rose cautiously, holding out to the light the string of pearls, rarely beautiful in their uniform shape and color, and glowing with a mellow radiance like liquid moonbeams.

For just a moment he was perplexed. How had

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the pearls come where but a minute before he had searched so diligently? The fallen shoe could alone give answer. The drunken man, sensible only to the value of his stolen property, had evidently hidden them therein, and the accidental overturning of the shoe had displaced them.

Now Brooke thrust them into the side pocket of his coat, and even as he did so his hand came in contact with something unfamiliar. It was oblong in shape and metallic. Puzzled, he drew out a gold card case, and then he smiled. It was the card case belonging to Miss Colby, which, strangely enough, from the moment he picked it up at the side of the bridle path in the Park that afternoon until this very moment had been entirely absent from his memory.

Still smiling, he opened it and drew out a card, and along the upper half of it he wrote hastily in pencil:

“The pearls you took in such cowardly fashion are now on their way back to their owner.”

Below the lines, in engraved old English, was the name

Miss Annette Colby.

Dropping the card into the shoe with a low

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chuckle, he replaced it on the chiffonier. Then, very quietly, he left the room, closing the door softly behind him. And the key that he had found, proving to be the right one, he stood a minute later in the free open air of the street, breathing a grateful prayer to Providence for his safe delivery and his unexpected good fortune.

CHAPTER IX

CONFERENCE

It was some minutes after midnight when Brooke arrived at the Waldorf-Astoria, his headache nearly gone, his knees once more reliable. In his journey down town by the Elevated he had pondered—between impatient indulgences in mental anathema at the lazy progress of the train—over the fantastic—almost incredible, indeed—events of the afternoon and evening. He had availed himself of that dinner invitation, meant evidently for some one else, on the flimsily uncertain chance of learning something of a man of the same name as that attached to the letter. And behold the astonishing result! Of such stuff dreams are made, he told himself, and questioned whether he was waking or sleeping. But the string of pearls which he fingered in his pocket was real beyond all mistaking, and there was no denying the rattle and rumble of the car in which he was riding, nor the characteristically unintelligible jargon of the guard who at intervals called the stations.

As he asked for "Mr. Moore" at the Information

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Desk in the crowded hotel lobby, a tall, alert-faced young man in evening dress detached himself from a group of men standing near and approached him, smiling:

"Mr. Moore?" The two facing each other spoke the name in chorus, with rising questioning inflection. Then they bowed in unison, and the next instant they were shaking hands.

"You're a little late, old chap," commented the Chicago youth.

"Yes," Brooke returned. "I didn't know when I 'phoned you that I was locked in. I lost some time hunting for a key."

At Mr. Moore's suggestion a table was found in the café, and a waiter beckoned.

"How about some supper?" he asked.

"Thank you, no," Brooke declined. "Not for me. I'm rather squeamish after my medicine."

They compromised on high balls; and when each had lighted a cigar, Moore said:

"I suppose we may be related in a way. Do you, by any chance, trace your line back to the author of 'Zeluco'? Or, maybe, you're a descendant of the Dublin poet?"

Brooke's amusement found expression in a whimsical smile.

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"No," he replied, "I can't follow the name back so far, I fear."

"Well," commented the other, "it's a good name, all right, and one to be proud of; but, as has been proved, it's a little too common for absolute comfort sometimes."

"Yes," said Brooke, "here are two of us; and it looks very much as though there might be a third, all with the given name of John."

"I think I should have made a better choice if it had been left to me."

Again Brooke's lips curved with a fleeting smile. He could not shoulder the blame on his parents; the name was of his own choosing. He raised his glass, took a leisurely drink and replaced it on the table.

"You never heard of these Mumford people?" he asked.

"Never."

"What did you think when you found that letter?"

"Well," answered Moore, as he shook the ashes from his cigar, "if it hadn't been for one thing I shouldn't have been at all suspicious. It would have seemed natural enough for some friends of mutual friends to invite me to dine, but anybody that knows anything about me knows that I'm just about as

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much at home in New York as I am in Chicago. I can hardly be called a stranger here; and yet that was the idea conveyed in the invitation."

"Then you don't think it was meant for you?"

"It might have been, but it seems hardly probable. But tell me what happened. Did they give you the names of the kindly people who suggested entertainment for the lonely and friendless Moore man?"

Brooke related his experience with more or less circumstantiality of detail, omitting only his recovery of the pearl necklace.

"But what, in Heaven's name," queried Moore, when he had finished, "do you suppose the kind lady drugged you for?"

"I don't know," Brooke answered. "I can't imagine. What is your theory? Would there have been any object in drugging you?"

"Only robbery. Nothing else, I assure you. And yet you say you found your valuables intact?"

"Absolutely." Brooke, to reassure himself, drew out his wallet, in which there were some papers, including the envelope containing the warehouse receipt for the fortune he had left that morning in the safe deposit vault.

He made sure that this envelope was still

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there, since that was his most valuable possession.

"I can't discover that they took a penny from me," he said. In his tone was a world of perplexity.

"It's the most thunderingly queer thing I ever heard of," commented Moore. "You couldn't bring a complaint against them. Your hostess simply gave you a dinner in the abundance of her hospitality. You drank too much wine and became incapacitated for a few hours. She was called out meanwhile, and when she returned you had gone. That is how it would appear to a police magistrate."

Brooke recognized the force of this.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of complaining," he said frankly; "but all the same I wasn't intoxicated."

"I don't believe you were," Moore confessed, with conviction, "but you couldn't make a judge think otherwise, in view of all the circumstances. Possibly there was a plot against some John Moore—not you nor me—and when they found they had bagged the wrong man they let it go at that. That's the best I can figure out. Do you suppose the woman's husband was in the house all the time, but thought it better not to show himself?"

"I don't know whether to think she has a husband," Brooke replied, still more at sea. "The drunken fellow in whose room I found the key might

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have been he, but there were several photographs of girls on his walls, and I hardly believe a wife would stand for those."

"Her friends, maybe," suggested Moore.

"Maybe," acquiesced Brooke, though from his knowledge of one of the photographs he concluded they were not. "This idea of a third John Moore interests me," he added. He saw now that he was not likely to make further progress in his mystery solution, and determined to amuse himself by way of relaxation by presenting a new perplexity to his new acquaintance, should he prove to be the John Moore of Miss Colby's knowledge.

"The name is common enough, as I have said," Moore remarked.

"There was a John Moore in the Philippines," Brooke ventured.

The other flushed proudly. He was a good-looking fellow, clean-cut, hard as nails, bright and winning. Brooke had liked him at first sight.

"I came back from Manila two months ago," he said simply.

"In the army?"

"I was, yes. Captain. Resigned my commission to go into business. The climate out there got on my nerves."

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"You know the Malmseys of Chicago, I imagine?" Brooke ventured further.

"Well, I should say so. Are they friends of yours? Dick Malmsey and I went to Yale together. There's a fine boy for you."

"I know them only by hearsay," Brooke explained. Then he went on: "How about the Leitners?"

"Lived next door to them on the Lake Shore drive since I was in kilts," Moore answered, warming. "That's a family for you. Kitty, you know, married Lord Frampton, one of the richest peers in England. Charming girl, Kitty. Where did you meet them?"

"They're friends of a friend of mine," Brooke returned guardedly.

"Who else do you know, or know of, out my way?"

"May be you know Miss Paddock?"

"Well, well! Nan Paddock? I know her about as well as I know anybody," Moore replied, lighting a fresh cigar. "It's odd you should have hit on those names. Ever meet Walter Paddock?" Brooke shook his head. "He's rather an ass," Moore went on, "but a good sort at heart. Money's spoiled him, that's the trouble. He thinks because the old man

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is worth a hundred millions he's immune from all law and justice, and runs amuck wherever he goes, regardless of consequences. I was talking to him when you came in. What do you suppose he had just proposed? A night run over to Philadelphia in his sixty-horse-power Panhard. He's just bought a balloon over there, and he wanted to take four of us up with him to-morrow morning."

"A balloonist, eh?"

"Thinks he is. Member of the Aëro Club. By Jove! Here he is now." And Moore turned with, "Hello, Walter!" to greet a fair-haired youth, as tall as himself, but with narrow, somewhat stooping shoulders, who at this juncture approached the table. Having presented him to Brooke, and invited him to join them—to do which he politely declined—Moore asked:

"How about it? Did Stevie and Harry decide to go?"

"Couldn't," answered young Paddock. "Harry's got a mare running in the Handicap to-morrow, and Stevie's got to see some folks off on the *Amerika* at daybreak. Damn shame! Both going to-morrow night though. How about you?"

Moore waved him away.

"Not for mine," he said laughing. "I'll wait

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until you have a little more experience. No trial trips for your Uncle Jack, Walter."

"Won't you come, Mr. Moore?" he invited, turning to Brooke. "Jack here is something of an old lady, you know—rather timid about his fading beauty. I'll assure you there isn't the slightest danger. I'll run you over to Philadelphia in my machine, and we'll come back by air line, if these southerly winds will hold good for another thirty-six hours."

The idea rather appealed to Brooke.

"How long will you give me to decide?" he asked.

"Ten o'clock to-morrow night. If you can manage it, I'd be glad to have you. You'll be as safe with me in that basket as in a Pullman."

To Brooke, whose recent experience with Pullmans was not altogether happy, the comparison was scarcely reassuring, but he thanked Paddock, nevertheless, and added:

"I'd like it immensely, and if I can manage it I'll be on hand here at ten sharp to-morrow night."

"Now I must be popping on," the Aëro Club member announced. "I was due at Martin's an hour ago, in case the trip wasn't pulled off to-night. Ta, ta, Jackie! Good night, Mr. Moore! Hope

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you'll cut everything else and join us on our little flyer."

And he strolled off.

"Crazy!" exclaimed Moore, when he had gone.
"Absolutely dotty!"

Brooke made no rejoinder. After a moment, however, he said:

"I wonder if you would care to make a call with me to-morrow afternoon on someone who knows all these people, and yet one whom you have never met?"

"Man, woman or child?" Moore asked indifferently.

"Child," answered Brooke, "or very little more. A very charming and delightfully ingenuous young lady."

"I'll be pleased. But how do you know I've never met her? If she's a Chicago girl, in this set, I'm sure to have run across her at some time or other."

Brooke's smile was cryptic.

"I'll take you to her on one condition," he suggested. "You mustn't ask me any questions."

"Aren't you going to tell me who she is?"

"I'll tell you the name you know her by."

"Then I do know her?"

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"Yes."

"But I thought you said——"

"That you never met her? I did say so."

"I don't understand."

Brooke emptied his glass.

"Were you ever called 'Jackie Boy'?" he asked.

Moore leaned forward, interested instantly, his arms flung across the table.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "Not she?"

"She."

"But where——"

"No questions," Brooke interrupted.

"Oh, but I say, old chap, this isn't——"

"Oh, yes, it is. It's perfectly fair. I don't know that I have a right, after all, to take you to her, unless I ask her permission first; and if you persist in questioning me I'll decide that you've broken the condition, and——"

Moore sank back in his chair, his under lip between his teeth.

"And not take you at all," Brooke concluded.

"Oh, what cruelty!" exclaimed Moore. "Fancy anything so inhuman! Here is a girl who has eluded me for a whole year, and now when a meeting with her is possible you threaten to snatch it from me. Why, man alive, that's barbarous!"

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"My threat is born of self-protection," Brooke explained, smiling and thoroughly amused. "There are certain questions which I can't answer, and to avoid being put in the position of refusing I simply demand that you won't ask any."

Moore grimaced to indicate how he suffered under this punishment.

"All right," he said at last, resolutely. "I'll be good; only you must keep your promise. I shan't let you out of that. Why, man, I'm mad about that girl. I shan't be able to sleep now for thinking of the joy of to-morrow. I believe it was really she who dragged me back from the Philippines. I've been hunting the United States over for her. Think how you would feel yourself under the same circumstances: She was visiting Walter Paddock's sister, and just for fun wrote to me to Manila and enclosed her letter in Nan Paddock's. It was just a lark of the two girls, conceived between them. Miss Paddock described her friend, but wouldn't give me her name, and the only signature to that letter, which I don't mind telling you was the first of a long and very charming correspondence, was 'Peaches.' Nan said she was as sweet as a basket of them, and hence the name. When I got back here, two months ago, Nan was abroad, and though

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I bothered old Walter to death about it, he really couldn't help me out, because he didn't know."

The romance entertained Brooke.

"I feel like a sort of fairy godmother who is to bring the two miserably separated lovers together," he laughed, "so that they may live happily ever after. All right, my dear fellow. I'll play the rôle. To-morrow afternoon—provided I'm not questioned in the meantime—you and I will together call on Miss—" He paused for just the shade of a second, and Moore hung expectantly on the name.

"Miss Peaches," added Brooke laughingly.

CHAPTER X

LOSS

BROOKE awoke the next morning with an oppressive sense of something neglected—some important duty left undone. The day was fine. Through his open window came the balmy zephyrs of late spring. From out a sky of cloudless blue the sun was bathing in yellow radiance the irregular plain of neighboring housetops. The exhilaration of the weather should have been in his blood, but instead he experienced something akin to the depression of a remorseful truant, who has chosen pleasure in lieu of work. His conscience rebuked him cruelly now for his weakness in permitting circumstance to turn him aside from that which was clearly the right and honorable course.

He should have sought his uncle and allowed the erratic Miss Colby to work out her own salvation. More than ever the truth surged in upon him, now, that the hundred thousand dollars, for which he held the safe deposit company's receipt, was not his money, and that his first duty was to have rid himself

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of its custody—to have handed it over to the proper authorities, explaining that the passenger killed at Mott Haven was the probable rightful possessor of that bag of wealth.

Of any contemplated dishonesty, however, he absolved himself completely. From the very first he had entertained no notion of appropriating any part of the money to his own uses. He had simply conceived the perhaps chimerical idea of finding the owner through his own unaided efforts. But with a single day's acquaintance with New York, the difficulties of such an undertaking had been in a measure at least revealed to him, and in such magnitude that he was rather appalled at the prospect.

Common sense had thus begun to leaven his romanticism, and regret for his ill-advised first course succeeded his enthusiasm; for he saw now, in the light of calmer reasoning, that he had by this impetuous caprice simply laid the ground-work for possible, if not indeed probable, misjudgment.

All this he had gone over the previous afternoon, and had closed his cogitation with a resolution to set matters straight at once. But the merest accident had diverted him, and his resolution had been not so much neglected as forgotten.

He questioned now whether it was not too late to

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do anything. If his uncle had identified the body at the morgue, that must prevent him, for the time being, at all events, from taking any steps to publicly unravel the tangle. That, he argued, would simply force upon him the carrying out—at least the attempt to do so—of his first project. Having found the owner of the funds and returned them intact, he could then announce himself, show cause why he had maintained silence hitherto, and make his delayed claim upon his mistaken avuncular relative.

Before breakfasting, Brooke bought a half-dozen morning papers, and took them with him to the café, dumping them on the wide window sill beside his chosen table. And, as he spooned his melon, sipped his coffee, and broke and buttered his rolls, his eye ran down column after column in search of information, on which, he reasoned, hung probably not only his good name, but perhaps his personal liberty as well.

In an out-of-the-way corner of the *Herald* he finally ended his search. Already the matter had lost public interest. Yesterday it was worth a column. To-day it was despatched in ten lines:

“Alexander Perry, of Boston,” Brooke read, “yesterday identified as his nephew the body of the

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young man who was killed by falling from the Empire State Express at Mott Haven on Monday night. The victim was John Brooke, of Honolulu, who arrived at San Francisco April 29, and was on his way to his uncle's home in Boston. Mr. Perry left for Boston last evening with the body."

The idea of his uncle identifying the remains of this utter stranger as a kinsman, gruesome as it was, appealed to Brooke's sense of humor. At the same time he read the statement with a measure of relief. There was no longer any chance of the real relations or friends of the dead man coming forward to claim the body and question the disappearance of the money; so he was now free to work along such lines as he should choose to discover whence those funds came and whither they were destined.

It was not an easy task. Already he had realized that. But it was one which called for ingenuity, deduction, and perhaps adventure, and he looked forward now with some degree of pleasure to its prosecution, and with quickening hope in its accomplishment.

As he leisurely continued his breakfast, his mind was busy formulating plans. He would look up "Shorty" Hanks at the earliest opportunity. He had pretended to know what was in the bag and from

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whom it came. All along Brooke had been impressed with the idea that the money was ill-gotten, and this fellow Hanks was evidently one of a company who were, to say the least, not particular as to their methods of achieving a living.

"Come over to the Narasac some afternoon and I'll introduce you to the gang!" That was the tenor of the invitation "Shorty" had given him. And now he would avail himself of it. He would go this afternoon, after he and Moore had called on Miss Colby.

This morning he would go back to that barber shop on Broadway. It was evidently frequented by men of the class he must learn more about. He had not forgotten the two who, yesterday morning, conjectured as to what had become of some one named Kennedy. That was only a straw, of course, but he must follow the wind, and these straws told which way it was blowing.

Brooke had slept later than he intended. It was already ten o'clock—unconscionably late for him to breakfast. He lighted a cigarette and asked the waiter to bring his check. Then he wondered whether he had enough money in his pocket to see him through the day. It was not wise, he thought, to carry much about with him, seeing the errand upon which he was bent. Perhaps it was even less wise,

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he told himself, to carry the safe deposit company's receipt for the bag of bank notes. It was a negotiable receipt, as he remembered it. All it needed was his signature, and anyone could get the bag it called for. To be on the safe side he would deposit it in the hotel office.

He took out his wallet and extracted the square envelope from among his other papers. Now, he would look at it, and see just the form. He lifted the flap of the envelope and drew out the enclosure. Then his dark skin paled suddenly to a leaden pallor, and a blank sheet of note paper trembled in his quivering fingers. But for this blank sheet of paper the envelope was empty.

He felt his heart flutter, oppressively, and his breath came with an effort. Someone had taken out the receipt and put the note paper in its place. That was clear. Instantly he saw, now, the object of the knockout drops. He *was* the John Moore they wanted, after all, but how did they know? That was the question. How did they know he had that receipt? How did they know he had deposited a bag full of money? How——

But it was idle to question. Though they had the receipt they could not have got the money from the bank over night. Again he glanced at his watch. It

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was five minutes after ten. Then the bank had been open for business just five minutes—not long enough for them to go through the formality of presenting the receipt and receiving the goods, he thought. Nevertheless, there was not a second to be lost.

He signed his check in haste, dropped his tip upon the table cloth, and almost ran out of the café. His first impulse was to telephone the bank, but on second thought he decided that he would save time by a dash in an electric cab. It was only a few blocks, and there was no telling how long he might be delayed in getting a telephone connection. Already he had had some experience with “wire busy.”

He was hurriedly making his way out to Thirty-fourth Street, when a hand clutched his sleeve.

“Hello, old chap! Who’s dying?”

He recognized Moore’s cheery tone, and paused for an instant.

“Come with me,” he invited, breathlessly, “I’m racing to Thirty-ninth Street.”

Out of sheer curiosity Moore followed. Brooke sprang into a waiting electric hansom, his acquaintance after him.

“New Netherlands Bank!” yelled Brooke. “And drive like hell! It’s a five dollar tip if you lose no time!”

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The cab had been headed toward Fifth Avenue. It was wheeling before its two passengers had settled down upon its cushions. Then the wind was beating their faces, as they sped westward.

"Have you gone suddenly crazy?" Moore queried, as he made a grab for his hat, which the pace had threatened to tear from his head.

"Not yet," Brooke answered, straining forward in an instinctive if futile effort to add to the speed. "But," he murmured, as the vehicle swung to the car tracks to avoid a halted delivery wagon, and then back to the asphalt again, "if we don't beat those scoundrels, there's no telling what may happen to me."

Moore had a dozen questions at his tongue's tip, but the churning of the cab as it dodged one obstacle after another, shot across the Sixth Avenue rails, and, careening, turned diagonally into Broadway, while policemen shouted unheeded warnings, and overtaken pedestrians staggered back half dead with fright from under its very wheels, was such as to make utterance a sheer impossibility.

Trucks were unloading great rolls of paper at the side of the *Herald* building, and a north-bound Broadway car, stopping for alighting passengers at Thirty-fifth Street, completely blocked the roadway. But the chauffeur of the electric hansom was

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eager to earn the promised gratuity. Quickly, without an instant's hesitation, he circled to the left, cleared both north and south-bound tracks, grazed a south-bound car, and, dodging back again between an ambulance, with clanging gong, and an express wagon, regained the east side of the thoroughfare, while Brooke and Moore were flung first this way and then that, to the tune of the cab's constantly vibrating bell, and the whole street stared in excited, wide-eyed amazement.

From Thirty-sixth Street the course was comparatively clear, and the hansom cut it like a black streak. The Hotel Normandie at Thirty-eighth Street flashed by, and Brooke's eyes were already fixed upon the bank's arched doorway in the near corner of the dingy yellow brick structure that is known as the Metropolitan Opera House. Then a passing car cut off his view, for a breath, and——

Up went his hand through the trap in the cab's roof. Instantly the speed slackened.

"Keep to this side of the street," he commanded, excitedly, "until you pass that hansom just leaving the bank; and then turn and follow it. Don't lose sight of it, and I'll make that five a fifty."

The cab proceeded a short quarter of a block and turned sharply about.

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"What the devil!" exclaimed Moore, getting his breath at last.

Brooke turned to him.

"I don't wonder you're dumfounded," he said, compassionately, as they rolled at very much lessened pace down Broadway in the wake of the other hansom, "but I'll explain it all presently. Just now, I'll merely tell you that we're in for a chase after two very clever thieves and something over a hundred thousand dollars in bank notes."

CHAPTER XI

PURSUIT

A BLOCK away, Brooke's straining gaze had descried the hansom cab standing at the curb before the bank. Within it he had glimpsed a man huddled far back in one corner, waiting evidently for some one inside the building. Then the passing car had hidden bank and sidewalk and cab from sight for just the briefest interval; but in that splinter of time a man had emerged from the bank's arched doorway and half crossed the pavement. For when Brooke's eyes had focussed again upon the scene he was within a pace or two of the cab step, carrying in his right hand a bulging dark brown leather traveling bag, bound about with heavy twine. Brooke had made too careful a study of that bag two nights before at the Hotel Astor to be mistaken about it, even at the distance.

Besides, the cording of it being his own handiwork, was an indisputable mark of identification. Beyond all question it was the bag he had deposited—the bag containing that mysterious fortune in bank notes.

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The hansom, which was headed south, must have passed or been passed so closely by the electric cab as to reveal Brooke's presence in the latter had he not instantly directed the chauffeur to keep straight on, hugging the eastern side of Broadway until he was well by it. The importance of giving the miscreants no hint that already he was on their trail had occurred to him at once, and while this course prevented him at the moment from getting a close view of them, it, nevertheless, gave him a more than compensating advantage.

The chase down Broadway was now being pursued in what seemed to both men in the electric vehicle a most leisurely fashion, comparing it, as they did, with their mad dash up that thoroughfare a few minutes before. Nevertheless, Brooke was not yet in a mood for explanation. Very keenly he felt the chagrin of having been less than a minute too late to stop the thieves, red-handed, on the bank's threshold. Again and again he deplored his carelessness in not examining the receipt the previous night. He had certainly had ample time to protect himself had he been only half-way cautious. Now it was a question just what to do.

It would be an easy matter, he supposed, to pick up a policeman, overtake the hansom and arrest the

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robbers; but that would mean publicity and a probable inquiry as to the origin of the money; and this was precisely what he did not wish—what, entirely innocent as he was, he could of all things least afford.

Whatever was done, he must do single-handed—or with Moore's help. Having reached this conclusion, he saw that it had become necessary to acquaint his companion with certain facts. It was possible that he would not care to join forces in an enterprise not only hazardous but for all he could know of his new acquaintance, possibly nefarious. Brooke appreciated the situation thoroughly. He would like to explain everything to Moore, but it was too long a story to give in detail, and he realized that any brief telling of it would seem incredible. Therefore he must reveal now only so much of fact as would serve his purpose, reserving all hint even of the rest until he could relate it in full with a convincing atmosphere of *vraisemblance*.

At Thirty-fourth Street the fleeing hansom had been held up with other vehicles by an officer of the traffic squad, to permit the passage of cars and wagons on the cross street, and, for the first time since Brooke engaged it, the electric cab came to a stop.

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Then he turned to Moore.

"Maybe you would rather not go on," he said, his tone apologetic. "When I asked you to come with me I didn't count on this. I hoped to get to the bank in time to prevent it. But now there's no telling where it's going to end. And I'll tell you very candidly that I can't call in the aid of the police."

Moore's reply smacked a little of irritation.

"What do you think I am?" he asked. "It's easy to see you don't know me very well. Why this sort of thing is meat and drink to me. And what can you do alone? There are two of them, aren't there?"

"Yes," Brooke answered; "but you don't know me very well, either; and how do you know but that there's something queer about the game? I tell you I can't ask police aid, and that must look suspicious."

"Don't you fret," demanded Moore. "I know an honest man when I see one, and I'm willing to go the limit on you, old chap."

Brooke smiled his appreciation. The policeman blew his whistle and the line of vehicles moved on.

"That's awfully good of you," said Brooke as the cab turned off into Sixth Avenue in pursuit of

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the hansom. "I'll give you an outline of the thing now, and when we get breathing space I'll tell you the whole darn story. Yesterday morning I put a bag in safe deposit up there. It contained a hundred and eighteen thousand dollars, more or less, in bills. It doesn't belong to me. How I got it, as I say, I'll tell you later. The bank people gave me a sort of warehouse receipt. It was in an envelope, and when I said last night that I hadn't been touched, I thought I hadn't been, because that envelope was still in my wallet. But this morning I found the envelope contained only a sheet of blank paper. That's why I made a dash for the bank."

"And the men in the hansom have the bag," Moore concluded.

"They have the bag and the money."

"But how did they know you had made that deposit? Who are they?"

"God knows," Brooke returned, perplexedly. "I've been trying to figure it out, but I can't."

"Did anybody know you had the money?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"A porter and a clerk at the Hotel Astor, and a newspaper reporter."

"No one else?"

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"Not a soul."

"But the bank wouldn't deliver that bag simply on presentation of the receipt," argued Moore, puzzled. "It would, at all events, have required an order from you."

Brooke's mystification was echoed in his words.

"That's the funniest part of it," he said. "I gave my signature at the bank; and for anyone to know that signature well enough to forge it is beyond the bounds of possibility."

"Oh, I don't see that," Moore objected. "You must have written letters in your time and signed checks and things. A fellow's signature isn't usually a hard thing to get."

Then Brooke told him that he had never been in New York until two nights ago.

"And besides," he added, in a sudden burst of frankness, "my name isn't really Moore. I simply took that when I deposited the bag. Now you see what chance there is of my signature lying around loose."

"Where else did you write it?" Moore asked, interestedly.

"On the register at the Waldorf-Astoria. No other place ever."

An elevated train rattled overhead so deafeningly

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as to make conversation for the moment impossible.

"What's your right name?" Moore inquired suddenly.

Brooke hesitated.

"Oh, never mind," his companion added; "it's nothing to me. I don't know why I asked."

"It was very natural for you to ask," Brooke replied. "My right name is Brooke—John Brooke."

Two lines appeared in Moore's brow, running up from between his eyes.

"Brooke," he repeated, questioning his memory. "Brooke. Where have I heard it?"

But at that moment the hansom, from which neither of them had withdrawn his gaze for more than a single instant, cut diagonally across the avenue beneath the elevated railroad structure and slowed up before a corner saloon. Their electric cab halted a few doors away.

Instantly Brooke pushed up the trap.

"Go on," he directed, "and cross into the side street, where I can see and not be seen."

In obedience to the order, the chauffeur crossed the rails and stopped on the lower side of Thirtieth Street. Through the window in the side of the cab the front of the hansom and its occupants were now plainly visible.

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"Good Lord!" Brooke exclaimed under his breath. "I begin to understand now."

"What?" questioned Moore.

"I've seen that little fellow before."

One of the men was small, almost weazened, with a sallow complexion, bulbous nose and tiny, furtive, rat-like eyes. The other was a veritable giant in bulk, low-browed and red-bearded. In the first of these Brooke recognized "Shorty" Hanks, the fellow he had drunk with the preceding morning; the fellow he had meant to look up again that very afternoon.

"He's getting out," Moore whispered, peering through the window over Brooke's shoulder.

"But the other's going to stay in and guard the bag," Brooke added. And he was right.

While "Shorty" entered the saloon, the big man leaned back in his corner, the end of a cigar between his lips.

"Couldn't we rush him now?" suggested Moore, pressing hard against Brooke's back. "I'll undertake to engage him, all right, while you snatch the bag and make off. Then I'll join you, and this driver of ours will outdistance anything they try to follow in."

But Brooke shook his head.

"No," he said decidedly. "I dare say we might

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manage it, but we'd be taking too many chances. I can't afford to get into a police mess over it. There are too many people about here. Besides the other fellow will be back in a minute."

And again Brooke was right. He had scarcely finished speaking when through the swing door of the saloon came "Shorty," carrying a pint flask in his hand.

"They'll take their refreshment as they go," remarked Moore, laughing. "Pity the bottle isn't larger. A quart would probably work on our side."

The hansom turned now into Thirtieth Street, passed them and rolled on at a fairly good speed eastward, while the electric cab resumed its dogging chase. At Broadway the little procession turned southward again.

"Have you any notion as to what part of the town they'll end up in?" Brooke inquired. "This is all new to me down here. I suppose that's the Flatiron Building ahead of us. I've seen pictures of it."

"Yes, that's the Flatiron," answered Moore. "It's odd you should be getting your introduction to New York localities in this fashion. Heaven only knows where these fellows are bound for, but it's safe to guess it's some spot where they think they

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can divide their spoil untroubled by intrusion. By the way, who is the little fellow?"

"I believe he is called 'Shorty Hanks.' I needn't explain he is a crook." Brooke could hardly make plain at this stage the circumstances of his acquaintance with this denizen of the under world; and Moore wondered how the young man beside him, who was confessedly an entire stranger in New York, knew such persons even by name and sight. Yet he was not actively suspicious. In saying he knew an honest man when he saw one he spoke the truth. He was a natural judge of character, and he had given Brooke a place with the sheep from the moment he laid eyes upon him.

On reaching Twenty-third Street the hansom diverged into Fifth Avenue, picking its way tortuously in and out between a crush of all manner of vehicles, from private broughams to touring cars, from omnibuses to furniture vans.

However much excitement there might be in prospect, this rather tedious progress southward was not exhilarating. On the contrary, it was wearisome by very reason of the delayed issue which both men knew lay at its end. As block after block was traversed without incident, they grew more and more fretfully impatient. The new scenes had for Brooke,

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under the circumstances, absolutely no interest. The Washington arch, around which they passed, he scarcely noticed. He was possessed, absorbed, dominated by one aim and purpose—to visit vengeance upon those outlaws ahead of him, and, in so doing, recover the property which he had come to regard as a sacred trust.

They were now navigating a veritable network of narrow streets to the southwest of Washington Square. Brooke had noticed McDougall Street on a lamp-post sign. At intervals, off to the right, he got glimpses of steamship wharves. Presently they passed again under an elevated railroad structure, and then, suddenly turning a corner, around which the hansom had preceded them, they were at their journey's end.

Even as their cab made the turn they saw the two men spring nimbly from the still moving hansom, which after less than a second's halt proceeded on through the contracted by-way. The larger man, carrying the bag, was a step in advance of his companion, but an instant sufficed for the basement of an old-fashioned three-story brick house to swallow them both.

The street was very narrow indeed, and very short as well—a tiny strait, as it were, between two

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streams but little wider or longer; and from end to end it was deserted, save by the two cabs, one of which was already disappearing around the farther corner.

Brooke lost no time in pursuing his quarry. While the slamming door still echoed through the silent alley he sprang across the thread of sidewalk, and, with Moore close behind, plunged down the squalid areaway, flinging himself upon the door, which, having failed to latch, swung unresistingly open.

But inside the dingy little box of a room on which it gave he paused in sudden dismay. For those upon whose very heels he entered were nowhere in view.

Moore halted, too, on the threshold, amazed, bewildered.

On one side of the place was a tailor's bench, on which, cross-legged, sat an old German, red-nosed and grey-haired, imperturbably plying his needle. On the opposite wall were tacked a couple of faded and out-of-date lithographs of men's fashions. Across the rear of the room extended a shelf, beneath which, against a dusty black cotton background, was a double row of coats and trousers on hangers.

The old German looked up in calm inspection of the intruders.

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“Vas ist?” he asked, smiling so naïvely that he added not a little to their disconcerting.

But Brooke was in no mood to answer questions. Ignoring the query, he stamped heavily about the little enclosure, fancying that nothing short of a trap in the floor could account for the miraculous disappearance he had just witnessed. But the boards gave no sign. The flooring was apparently of equal solidity in all parts.

“Vas ist?” repeated the tailor, throwing to one side the waistcoat on which he had been working and dropping his feet over the table’s edge. “Come you away from dem clo’es!” he commanded excitedly now, for Brooke, with sudden inspiration, had plunged into the line of hanging garments in the rear, and was tearing at the cotton background.

At that moment a little exultant cry escaped him, and Moore, assured that he had solved the mystery, sprang forward. With an elbow thrust he threw the now thoroughly alarmed German reeling into a front corner of his shop, and then, in a bound, was after Brooke, who had already disappeared through the clothes barrier, which stretched across the shop’s furthestmost side.

CHAPTER XII

TRAPPED

BACK of the rusty black drapery Brooke had found a thin board partition, punctured by a narrow doorway, which gave otherwise unobstructed entrance to a rear room. This room, lighted by a single small window of patched and dust-coated panes, was so dark that for a moment he was unable to distinguish a single object within it. Nervously anxious to lose no time, however, and utterly regardless of lurking danger, he groped forward with outstretched hands, his ears alert for the slightest sound. And as he moved, his eyes quickly accustoming themselves to the dusk, objects took shape about him.

But they were inanimate objects, all of them. If the men he sought had come this way, they had already gone farther; for the room, smaller even than that which he had just left, contained nothing save a low cot bed, strewn with a motley assortment of disarranged coverings—a ragged grey blanket and some old coats—and too low to afford a hiding place beneath it; a small, rusty cook stove; a table,

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on which were some unwashed dishes ; a hanging cupboard and a single chair.

At the far corner, though, to the right, was another door, and as Moore entered Brooke's hand was upon the knob. But this door was fast. Moreover, it was stout, made of heavy planking and so firmly set as to be unshakable.

For a moment Brooke's hopes fell. Already valuable time had been lost, and now he had come upon what seemed an impassable barrier. The door doubtless led to stairs, which in turn led to the upper part of the house, and to another door opening on the street. Possibly, aye, probably, the thieves were already a block or more away. He had made a mistake in not having Moore watch the house front.

He looked about for something to use as a battering ram on the door. His weight and Moore's combined would not be sufficient, he knew, to feaze it. The chair would break to kindling against it. Then he saw Moore handling the little cook stove. There was no fire in it, and if hurled with strength it might rend the planking. Brooke leaned down determinedly to make the effort. Moore had loosened the pipe and a piece of it fell, clattering.

But at that juncture the sound of a key turning

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the door's lock, and the rasping grating of a heavy bolt shot back, arrested them both. Simultaneously the voice of the old German cobbler rose shrill behind them.

"Ach, mein Gott! Vat for you vant here?"

It seemed like a clearly devised ruse to distract their attention for an instant from the door—a cue, possibly, to the person on the other side. If so, it failed; for when the door opened quickly, disclosing the enormous bulk of the red-bearded giant of the hansom, they sprang forward as one man, veritably hurling themselves upon him and bearing him back with their catapultian onslaught.

But even as they did so the report of a pistol rang out sharply. In the dim light of the room they had not seen that he was armed. Neither Brooke nor Moore had any weapon, save their fists, but they used these to good purpose. Savage blows rained on the big fellow's face and jaw as he sprawled backward, with wildly clutching arms, in the narrow passageway; and his head coming in hard contact with the sharp edge of a stair, as he went down, completed his undoing.

He lay stunned, bruised and bleeding, while his assailants, scrambling to their feet, and quite unharmed by the random revolver shot, plunged over

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his inert body and up the narrow flight of stairs to the floor above.

The gloom of the basement was here succeeded by Cimmerian darkness, and Brooke paused with his hand on the rickety banister rail, in hope of some guiding sound. For two or three seconds the hard breathing of Moore, who had perforce halted behind him, was his only reward. Then, straight before him, possibly thirty feet away, through the pitch black, he heard a shuffling footstep on bare boards.

He had fancied, at first, that the house was a tenement, the upper floors occupied by a number of families, but the darkness of the hallway and the silence removed the possibility of this conjecture. It seemed reasonable now to suppose that the little basement shop was a blind, and that the whole building was given over to the uses of a gang of criminals, of whom he had seen three characteristic examples. Reasoning rapidly, he concluded that the person whose footsteps he had just heard, was, in all probability, his chance acquaintance, "Shorty" Hanks. It was a fair presumption, too, that "Shorty" had a gun, and would not hesitate to use it if occasion offered. Why he had not taken a chance already of firing in the dark, seeing that he must have heard their ascent of the stairs, did not at first occur to

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Brooke, but the next instant he realized that "Shorty" could not be sure that it was not his own partner who had come thus suddenly into the upper darkness.

To make a rush upon "Shorty," though, would end his uncertainty, and then his gun would bark, and it were folly to expect a second time to escape the bullet. If "Shorty" could only be lured nearer! If Brooke had heard the big fellow speak he would have chanced an imitation of his voice. But he had not heard him, and so "Shorty" would in all likelihood detect the difference at once. He thought of whistling, but instantly discarded the idea, and then that occurred which put an end to his efforts to plan. Moore coughed.

Involuntarily Brooke ducked low, expecting a shot, but instead there came a repetition of that sound of shuffling footsteps, and a low, almost whispered, call:

"Jerry!"

Whoever it was, was coming nearer, and Brooke dropped quietly to the floor, lying flat, face down, with hands stretched forward.

"Jerry!"

The whisper was repeated, and Moore, keenly appreciative of the situation, having recovered from his irritation over that first cough which refused to be

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strangled, coughed again, this time with intention.

At the same instant, almost, the passage echoed with the dull, heavy sound of a falling body. Brooke had tackled the shuffling oncomer; clutched him about the knees and sent him toppling over backward. Before the echo died away he was kneeling upon his chest, while his hands pinioned his arms.

Then a match flared up, in fitful illumination of the darkness, and Moore stood beside him, looking down.

"Need help?" he asked, laconically.

Brooke shook his head. It was indeed "Shorty" who lay beneath him; and wiry though the little fellow was, he was no match for his captor.

"Not to hold him," said Brooke, confidently, "but you might see if he has a gun about him. But first get a light from somewhere, can't you? Isn't there any gas here?"

At the foot of the second flight of stairs, a few steps away, there was a single pendant burner, and this Moore lighted.

"You're a nice chappie," Brooke remarked to his prisoner, "going back on a pal!"

"Shorty" squirmed, frowning.

Brooke inflicted a vicious knee poke between his ribs.

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"Speak up!" he commanded. "What do you mean by it?"

"You ain't no pal," "Shorty" wheezed. "Fur God's sake let me breathe. I ain't got no gun."

Moore was making a careful search. All he found was the nearly empty whiskey flask.

"Where's the bag?" Brooke asked.

"Shorty" leered.

"Where you won't find it," he answered, doggedly. Brooke's knee kneaded his captive's solar plexus.

"Where?" he repeated.

"I don't know, damn you!"

Brooke turned to Moore.

"Here!" he said. "Hold this arm, will you? I'll get my answer from him."

Moore pinioned the fellow's left arm as Brooke released it, to take a clutch on his throat.

"Now!" he urged, determinedly. "Where is it? Speak up! We've no time to lose," and his fingers pressed threateningly upon "Shorty's" larynx.

"Jerry—had—it," he answered, gasping; "Jerry—had—it."

"But Jerry hasn't it now. He turned it over to you. What have you done with it?"

Another strangling grip and the fellow's face purpled.

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"Stop—it," he murmured; "I'll—tell."

Brooke's fingers relaxed.

"Well?" he commanded.

"Under the bed, down stairs."

Once more the pressure was put on; relentlessly this time.

"You lie!" Brooke hissed. His reason told him that this was a subterfuge.

"Shorty's" little eyes bulged, and his tongue appeared between his darkening lips.

"One more chance, now," Brooke allowed, "one more, and if you don't tell me the truth I'll finish you."

When his grip loosened the fellow gasped, inarticulately.

"Speak up!" Brooke shouted, impatiently.

"I'll—show—you." The words were a whisper.

Brooke looked at "Jackie" with a smile of satisfaction.

"What do you suppose has become of 'Dutchy'?" he enquired, realizing that the old man might be preparing extra trouble for them. "Jerry's safe enough for a while, but the old fellow may bring assistance. Before we let my friend up, you'd probably better investigate. All right, I'll take that wrist again."

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When, after a couple of minutes' absence, Moore returned, bringing with him the revolver which he had found in the lower hallway, it was to say the German was not likely to give them any annoyance.

"He got the bullet intended for us," he explained. "He's lying across his cot down there unconscious and bleeding like a pig. You can let your man up now. This will hold him, I imagine," and Moore, with his fingers on the trigger, covered the prostrate "Shorty" with the six-shooter.

Brooke released his hold and got to his feet.

"Come on!" he ordered, sharply.

"Yes, we're from Missouri," Moore added; "you've got to show us, and show us quickly."

The little sallow-faced creature arose with an effort. The muzzle of the revolver was pressing cold behind his ear.

"Move!" Moore commanded. "And move fast! We'll follow all right."

He began shuffling toward the street door, his two captors at his heels. The single overhead gas jet showed a bare, carpetless hallway, unspeakably dirty.

Brooke saw now that the inner vestibule door was unlatched.

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"It's there," said "Shorty," halting and pointing to the vestibule.

Eager, yet half doubting, Brooke pressed forward. Swinging the door inward, he peered into the dusk of the narrow space thus revealed.

"This side; to your left," "Shorty" directed.

Moore saw Brooke stoop. When he rose, the bag was in his hand, and he was critically examining the twine which bound it.

"All right," he said, simply. "It hasn't been opened. This is better luck even than I hoped for."

Moore was smiling with pleased satisfaction. Playfully he jabbed his prisoner's ear with the pistol barrel.

"You're a clever one, I don't think," he remarked, banteringly. "Why didn't you make off when you had the chance? All you had to do was open that outer door and beat it while the going was good."

"And run into your automobile steerer settin' on the stoop, eh?" retorted "Shorty," sullenly. "It was Jerry that was the slob. He'd ought to have stayed with me. Then you'd never a' got us."

Brooke laughed.

"Maybe," he said. "I don't see myself why he opened that door."

"He was drunk, or he wouldn't a' tried it,"

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"Shorty" explained. "He was fur puttin' you both to sleep, so as to make a clean get away."

"A case of mistaken judgment, that was all," commented the Chicagoan.

They descended the stairs to the basement, Brooke with the bag leading, Moore with the revolver in the rear.

The big outlaw was still lying motionless in the passage. On the cot the old German lay groaning.

"'Shorty,'" said Brooke, magnanimity in his voice, "I'm going to give you a chance to go free, though you don't deserve it." He stood facing the miserable little crook, whose rodent eyes were screwed to pin points. "If you'll answer a few questions truthfully we'll leave you here to minister to your friends, who seem to need aid pretty badly. Is it a go?"

The wretched dwarf-like creature glanced at the distorted figure of the German, and then at the little puddle of blood on the floor, in which a corner of the grey blanket was soaking.

"What you want to know?" he asked.

"Where do you think this bag came from?"

"Shorty" leered grotesquely.

"That's easy," he said, confidently. "I seen it before."

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"Where?"

"Kennedy brought it the last time. Oh, you know, all right."

"Kennedy?"

"Sure."

"Who is Kennedy?"

The fallow face assumed an expression of bored impatience.

"Quit your kiddin'," he said. "I can't tell you nothin'."

Brooke caught him by the shoulder.

"Listen to me!" he commanded, "I'm in dead earnest. Tell me what I ask you, and you'll hear no more of this affair from me or through me. If you don't I'll send that fellow on the stoop for an officer. This is your last chance."

"Shorty" shrugged his shoulders.

"Kennedy's with the Burleigh crowd."

"Who are they?"

"Who?" "Shorty" seemed puzzled.

"Yes. What's their game?"

"Say," replied "Shorty," "that's a hard one. They got a dozen of 'em."

Brooke paused in his chain of interrogation. This fellow, he saw, was a mine of information. The problem was how best to get it out.



"BROOKE WAS KNEELING UPON HIS CHEST."

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" 'Shorty,' " he said, throwing into his tone all the conviction he could muster, " I want to see you again. I'll make it worth your while. There's a hundred dollar bill in it for you, if you'll give me a few straight tips."

The prisoner pulled down the corner of his mouth.

" I ain't that sort," he returned. " You can't pay me to squeal."

" I don't want you to squeal," Brooke explained. " I want to learn the business, that's all. There's a lot of money in this bag. I want to invest it to good profit."

" Shorty's " smile was incredulous. He even winked at Moore, who still stood at his right shoulder.

" We'll play square," Moore assured him.

" Go on!" " Shorty " retorted. " Don't try to bull me. You're a couple of slick guys, ain't ye? Well, it won't go. See? "

Brooke laughed, which rather disconcerted his captive.

" All right," he said calmly. And then addressing Moore, he added: " Keep your eye on him a minute, while I send for an officer."

He was lifting the black drapery to enter the front room when " Shorty " called:

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"Cut it out, will you? You got me dead, I guess. I'll do what you want. And a hundred looks pretty good to me just now."

Brooke came back, facing him once more.

"What sort of a joint is this we're in?" he asked.

"It's a fence," Moore volunteered. "I'll tell you that."

"Sure," "Shorty" agreed, nonchalantly.

His inquisitor put a hand on each of the little crook's shoulders and fixed him with a steady gaze.

"I want to see you to-night," he said sternly. "Meet me at the corner of Broadway and Thirty-fourth Street at eight o'clock. If you're over ten minutes late this whole story goes to the police. If you're there on time, and not tongue-tied, the hundred is yours. Is it a bargain?"

"Shorty" put out his hand.

"Never mind about that," Brooke told him. "I'll take your word."

He beckoned Moore with a movement of his head, and a minute later the pair, with the bag of money between them, were being whirled back up town in the electric hansom.

CHAPTER XIII

ORBITAL

MISS ANNETTE COLBY—in spite of her marriage she was known only by that name at the Saint Regis—presented a very entrancing picture to Brooke that afternoon as, daintily arrayed in the most becoming of diaphanous blue and white frocks, she received him in the little white and gold Louis Seize drawing-room of her suite.

“You have driven me wild with curiosity,” she declared, by way of greeting. “After such a telephone message as yours, an army of bandits could not have driven me out until you came. Now tell me, at once, as you value your peace and happiness, what you meant by saying that you were bringing me two things that you knew I cared for? Two surprises—one greater than the other.”

The girl's animation, which was akin to gayety, surprised Brooke. He had expected to find her, after a day's contemplation of her marital fiasco, in a state bordering on hysterics. Most women would have regarded such an experience as a tragedy. Had he been informed, when he called up the Saint Regis,

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that Miss Colby was too ill to come to the 'phone—that nervous prostration was threatened, and doctors and nurses were in attendance—it would have been no more than he had foreseen. Her seeming light-heartedness of the previous day rather tended indeed to this sequel. From her almost unnatural ebullience of spirits a reaction was next to inevitable. And while there had been no sign of tears in her voice as she spoke to him over the wire, he, nevertheless, expected when he called to find her with lids swollen and nose-tip pink from much weeping.

Her blue eyes danced as she put her question, and Brooke thought he had not half appreciated their beauty until then. Certainly her lids were not swollen, and there was no sign of pink about that rather impertinent little white nose of hers.

As the girl gave to him no indication of unhappiness over her brief hymeneal adventure, so Brooke exhibited to her no token of his exciting experience of the morning or the little less sensational chapter of events in which he had participated the night before. He was quite the same cheery, affable young gentleman who had come to her succor in the Park—clean-cut, well-groomed, reliant and reliable, and with a soul of honor visible through his big, frank, wide-open eyes.

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"What I said was perfectly true," he laughed, as he found a place on a comfortable couch, entirely out of keeping with the period in which the room was furnished. "I am wondering, though, which you really care the more for."

"How can I tell you until I know what they are?" the girl queried, interestedly.

"One you lost and the other you never found," he hinted.

"Oh, don't tease me," she pleaded, with a fascinating little frown. "That sounds exactly like a conundrum; and I never was good at conundrums."

Brooke's hand was in the side pocket of his coat. He drew it out now, and, rising, stepped over to her.

"This is what you lost," he said, extending his arm. She held out her shapely, slender little hand, pink palm upward, and he dropped into it a string of pearls.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, delightedly, her blue eyes alternating in survey of the jewels and study of Brooke's face. "Oh! I can't believe it is true. How in the world did you get them? It is uncanny. You must be a wizard or something."

Brooke, smiling, shrugged his shoulders.

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"Coincidence," he answered. "That is alone responsible. After all, the world is very small."

She ran the pearls through her fingers. It was a magnificent string.

"But the world isn't small," she contradicted, with a sudden minor note in her voice. "Did you ever want to find someone very much? Those you don't care anything about are always running across your path, while those you would care to encounter are like needles in the proverbial haystack."

"That may be so, but the fact that those you care nothing about are, as you say, always running across your path, establishes a theory that I believe in very thoroughly, and that theory is that we all move in circles. That is what we mean when we say the world is small. It isn't really. It's only that our circle is small, or rather that our ring is narrow—and in it we meet again and again the same people, or those who are friends or relations of the same people. Our ring, or orbit, may have a tremendous circumference, limited only, really, by our traveling capacity, but no matter how far it extends, we find within its narrow borders persons we know or know of, while outside are thousands of other rings or orbits in which are persons we never met, never will meet or never hear of."

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Miss Colby was interested.

"What an odd theory!" she exclaimed. "And yet it explains lots in my own experience."

"It does in everyone's," Brooke insisted, warming to his subject. "If I were to tell you how the people in my orbit have been crowding one another in the past two days you would say it was impossible in a great big city such as New York is. Out in Honolulu, where I came from, that sort of thing might be expected, but here in New York it doesn't seem credible."

"For instance?" asked the girl.

"Well, for instance, my tumbling across you the way I did. If you had been a minute later with that scream——"

"Did I scream?" she interrupted.

"Well, we'll call it that," Brooke returned. "If it had come a minute later I shouldn't have heard it. I should have been riding off alone in the hansom we subsequently rode in together. If you had been found by any other man he would not have been the recipient, only an hour or so previously, of a letter from a Mrs. Lucille Mumford, of West 103rd Street, asking him to dine that evening."

The blue eyes of the girl spoke her amazement, but she did not interrupt him.

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"And if Mrs. Lucille Mumford had not given me drugged wine and then gone out, leaving me to be locked in by an intoxicated person who arrived in her absence, I would never have been forced to search the rooms of the flat, or, by sheer accident, after having given up hope, fairly have fallen upon your pearl necklace."

She leaned forward, tense with the interest which this revelation awakened.

"It is all perfectly, stupendously unreal," she murmured.

"And that is the least part of what has befallen in the last twenty-four hours," Brooke rejoined.

She asked him for more details, and he gave them to her, avoiding only a more explicit reference to the man who, under the law at least, was her husband.

When he had finished she sat silent for a little, thoroughly nonplussed by the recital. Presently, however, she said:

"He'll never know what became of this, will he?" And she held up her pearls, suspended from a tapering forefinger.

Brooke laughed.

"Oh, yes, he will," he answered. "I left your card in its place."

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"My card!"

From his pocket he drew her gold cardcase and handed it to her.

"I found that in the Park where you fell, beside the bridle path," he explained.

"Oh, how funny!" she laughed merrily. "How angry he must have been when he discovered the card! And how puzzled!"

"I hope he has not troubled you," Brooke ventured. He wondered what she had done to repair her folly. Surely, gayly irresponsible as she seemed, she was not going to sit idle, legally shackled to this reprobate.

"No," she answered, blithely. "He doesn't know where I am. I am trying to get up courage to wire for papa. He must come and undo the tiresome thing for me. But you see, I ran away. He does not know I am in New York. He thinks I am at home in Chicago. Nobody knows I am here but Connie. I left a note for her. She thinks I am visiting Natalie Van Dam down at Roslyn."

"I wouldn't lose any time sending that wire, if I were you," the young man suggested. "You don't want the newspapers to get hold of your romance, do you? Your husband might appeal to them to find you."

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For a moment she seemed perturbed.

"Do you really think so?" she asked naïvely.

"Surely not after what he did!"

"A fellow who would do that would do anything," Brooke replied. "You write out the telegram and I'll send it."

"Oh, thank you very much; but you needn't trouble, Mr. Moore. Elise will do it."

"Elise?" Brooke queried.

"Yes, my maid. You knew I had my maid with me, didn't you? You couldn't think I was here alone."

The color mounted to the young man's face. He was in a new world. Young women of his acquaintance in Honolulu did not have maids. Some of their mothers did, but not the daughters. In the Land of Mammon, however, he should have expected these evidences of wealth, and he felt abashed, if not indeed mortified, by his failure to evidence familiarity with the customs of rich America.

"When I came here yesterday," Miss Colby went on, "I just telephoned Elise to put my trunk on a cab—I only had one with me, fortunately—and bring it over, leaving no address."

"You'll have your maid send that telegram at once, then, won't you?" Brooke insisted.

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"Not now," she procrastinated. "After you go I will. Now you must tell me your second surprise. It can't equal the first, though. I am sure of that."

"I want you to send that telegram," her visitor persisted seriously. "When you have sent it, I'll tell you." His manner was as commanding as his tone was grave.

"Oh, how mean of you!" she exclaimed. "That is playing on my curiosity. I don't believe your second surprise is very interesting, after all."

"I think you'll find it even more interesting than the other," Brooke told her. "You're going to send that wire immediately. Aren't you?"

"I would never have believed you were such a tyrant," she declared. "Do all the Honolulu men rule the women in this fashion?"

"This is for the woman's good."

"An hour won't make any difference."

"It might," he argued. "Remember what a minute would have done yesterday."

She rose without further demur and changed her seat to a gold chair before a white escritoire. Brooke rose, too, and stood at the open window looking out on the avenue and the congestion of private equipages—a fabulous fortune in glinting carriages, sleek

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horseflesh, dazzlingly mounted harness and variegated motor cars, not to mention liveries, rich carriage gowns and hats with long, sweeping ostrich plumes. In such society, his common sense should have told him, maids are regarded as necessities.

When he turned, a middle-aged French woman was standing beside her mistress.

"Prenez ce telegram à l' office, Elise. There," added the girl, "that was done quickly, wasn't it? Poor papa! He will be so alarmed."

Brooke's air was most mature; almost paternal.

"You should have—" he began, and then checked himself. "But no," he added, "it is very good of you to be so obedient."

"And now!" she cried, jubilantly expectant, her eyes alight. "And now my reward. What else did you find?"

She had risen and come over to him.

"'Jackie Boy.'"

Scarcely had he framed the words than she clutched his two sleeves with her soft little hands.

"You *are* he," she cried exultingly. "I knew you were. And you said just now you came from——"

But he interrupted her quickly.

"No, no," he corrected, smiling indulgently, "I

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am not. I swear I am not. But I have found him. And he is coming here at half-past four."

Her hands dropped to her sides, and Brooke flattered himself that an expression of disappointment fell upon her piquantly beautiful young face.

"Coming here?" she repeated. "At half-past four? Why, it must be that now."

He looked at his watch.

"Five minutes of it," he said, "and I'll guarantee he won't be late."

She sank into a chair and sat in silence, her eyes on the white and rose carpet.

"Aren't you delighted?" he asked her. "'Jackie Boy' could scarcely wait for this afternoon. Or," he caught himself up suddenly, "have I done wrong, I wonder? Was it very rude of me to invite him without asking your consent? I fancied, you know——"

Hastily she put him at his ease.

"No, no," she assured him smilingly. "It was very good of you. Only he never knew my name, and——"

"He doesn't yet. I wouldn't tell him. So if— Well, you see it isn't too late to shunt him off, if——"

"But how is he to call if he doesn't——"

"I'm to meet him in the office down stairs," Brooke explained, "and present him formally."

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Very archly she raised her childish blue eyes to her visitor.

"He is nice, isn't he?" she queried.

"He is one of the finest fellows I ever met," Brooke declared, enthusiasm in tone and manner.

"A ripping good sort."

"And very handsome?"

"Big," was the reply, "if you mean that, and strong and—and clean," he added.

For a little she seemed considering. Then she asked suddenly:

"You like him, don't you?"

"Very much," Brooke answered.

"Well, then," she said, with decision, "I'll meet him. Only, somehow," and she faltered and dropped her eyes, "only somehow, don't you know, I—well, I wish you had been he."

Brooke laughed lightly.

"That's awfully good of you," he said, with earnestness, in spite of a momentary embarrassment.

"I appreciate it more than I can tell you."

What a charming girl she was! And what an odd admixture of irresponsible frivolity and naïveté! Ever since he had met her he had tried in vain to reconcile her, as he saw her, with what she told him of herself. It was more than ever difficult now, after

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seeing the sodden creature to whom she had plighted her troth.

Again he glanced at his watch.

"Perhaps I had better go down," he said, rising. "I dare say our friend has been kicking his heels down there for a good twenty minutes."

She did not speak, and he paused a second, irresolute. And, so pausing, his eye fell upon a framed photograph on a white enameled and gold cabinet in the corner he was facing.

Then Annette Colby glanced up, startled, for Brooke had fairly leaped across the room, and was standing now with the framed picture in both hands, his head bent and his eyes devouring the likeness.

"What is the matter?" she called in surprise. "You don't know how you frightened me."

But Brooke did not hear her. He stood as if transfixed, his whole soul in his gaze, his muscles tense, rigid.

She rose and stepped over to him. Her hand on his arm brought him back to a consciousness of his surroundings. When he spoke, however, it was in disjointed exclamations.

"This!" he cried, pointing to the picture, which he still held. "This! Who? Where did you——"

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The girl saw then, for the first time, what it was that had so strangely aroused him.

"That," she said, very calmly, "is a photograph of Connie—my sister. Why?"

For a second, hanging on her answer, his eyes had left the face on the card. Now they went back, and for another moment he gazed in silence.

"Your sister?" he repeated slowly. "Then—No, I cannot be mistaken. I should know that face anywhere. I remember now I saw the resemblance yesterday in the Park. You are rather alike, aren't you?"

The girl looked at Brooke now in excited surprise.

"You mean you know her?" she asked, her blue eyes wide.

"Just a little," he answered dreamily; "just a very little. Three nights ago I carried her fainting out of a wrecked Pullman sleeper, somewhere out in Indiana."

CHAPTER XIV

CONSPIRACY

OVER an excellent dinner in Delmonico's palm room that evening Brooke told Moore his story. And he told it fully and frankly, with an abundance of detail; beginning with the death of his parents in Honolulu and his uncle's invitation to come to him in Boston, and ending with his strange finding of the bag of money and his encounter with "Shorty" Hanks at the door of the bank, after he had deposited the treasure.

There were certain points in the story where the tale which "Jackie Boy" had heard that afternoon from the red lips of Annette Colby, fitted and joined and branched off; and it was only natural, perhaps, that, interesting and remarkable as Brooke's independent narrative was, these junctions should be to Moore the most vitally engrossing portion of the recital.

For the young Chicagoan's ardor for his mysterious correspondent had waxed even warmer upon meeting her, and he had candidly confessed to Brooke

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that he would not rest until her mad marriage was annulled and he had himself led her to the altar.

"Now, isn't she," he queried, enthusiastically, "the most deliriously fascinating girl you ever met?"

Brooke raised his eyebrows and pursed his lips.

"With all due respect to your taste," he answered, teasingly, "I can't honestly say she is."

"What!" Moore cried, disgustedly. "Do you mean——"

"She runs a very good second," Brooke interrupted, "but you will excuse me when I say that as you have never met her sister, you are not competent to judge from my standpoint."

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want to see any girl lovelier than Annette Colby," he confessed. "She wouldn't be human. Besides, I don't believe she exists, notwithstanding your assertion. You see, old chap, you're biased."

"Wait," Brooke adjured, laughing. "That's all."

Again and again they had attempted to discuss other subjects—the course that "Shorty" Hanks had pursued to get a fairly good imitation of Brooke's signature on the Safe Deposit Company's receipt (for they had seen this, and it *was* a fairly good imitation); the connection between "Shorty" and "Jerry"

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and the Mumford household; the real origin of the bills in the traveling bag; whether Kennedy was a safe-breaker, a second-story man or a forger; all these and more—and again and again, invariably, in fact, their conversation had drifted back to a rapturous consideration of two superlatively attractive young women—the Misses Colby.

They had dined early without stopping to dress, in order that together they might go to meet the unprepossessing but evidently shrewd Mr. Hanks; but, so engrossing had been Brooke's narrative and its subsequent discussion, that the time slipped away unheeded, and ten minutes of eight found them still at the table with coffee before them and cigars just lighted.

Once more an electric cab was brought into requisition, and, as the clock on the *Herald* building pointed to eight o'clock, it came to a standstill on the corner of Broadway and Thirty-fourth Street.

There the two men stepped out, and, dismissing the conveyance, took up a position where they could see and be seen. Dusk had fallen, but the thoroughfare was bright with myriads of electric lights. The corner was alive with people; many of them theatre-goers. Up and down Broadway they surged in two great restless currents. From the dinner tables of

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hotels and restaurants, from the elevated railway station across the street, from the Sixth Avenue and crosstown electric cars, fresh additions were constantly being poured into the human maelstrom.

But there was no sign of "Shorty" Hanks.

Slowly the minute hand on the *Herald* clock moved on to the I.

Moore nudged Brooke.

"There!" he whispered.

A small man in a straw hat shuffled up the street. But it was not "Shorty," though it resembled him.

"Five minutes more," Brooke said; but he had little confidence.

The minute hand slipped from minute to minute. Electric street cars, with clanging bells, rumbled by; cabs darted past; overhead, an elevated train, with glittering windows, sped northward.

"His time is up," Brooke remarked, comparing his watch with the clock.

"Give him another five minutes," Moore advised.

The night was warm. It was early May, but there was a hint of Summer in the air.

"He's taking a big chance," observed Brooke. "How does he know that I will not carry out my threat?"

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"He may be afraid we've set a trap for him," the Chicagoan suggested. "To tell the truth, I hardly expected him. Did you?"

Brooke shook his head in negation.

"No," he confessed, "I didn't. But, after all, it makes no great difference. He probably wouldn't have told the truth had he come. I wonder what he meant by the gang around the Narasac?"

Moore smiled as he said:

"When you have been in New York longer you'll know more about its neighborhoods. Broadway and Forty-second Street—about which cluster several more or less conspicuous hotels, including the one you have named—is the stamping ground for such graceless members of society as confidence men, wire-tappers, grafters and gentlemen of kindred pursuits. I must admit I didn't know that crooks of the Hanks persuasion held out there, but after all the only difference is in the method employed."

While he was still speaking Brooke caught his elbow.

"Quick," he whispered, sudden agitation in his tone; "see that fellow in the check suit? The one in front of the woman in the blue hat. There! He's turning his head!"

Moore saw him and said so. The man, whose back

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was towards them, was following the diagonal line of Broadway northward.

"That's Mumford!"

The announcement stirred "Jackie Boy" to instant action.

"Let's follow the blackguard," he proposed, all animation. "I'd like to get a chance to thrash him." He was striding in pursuit as he spoke. Brooke, at his side, smiled at his impetuosity.

"You can't very well assault him on the street," he warned, "but I suppose you might pick a quarrel with him."

"Trust me," Moore rejoined, as he forged forward until he was almost on the fellow's heels.

In an undertone Brooke urged patience. "There's no telling," he murmured, "what we may not learn if we go slowly."

They saw now that the so-called riding master was not alone. A somewhat overdressed youth in a Panama hat and a light gray—almost white—cut-away suit walked with him. Mumford was smoking a pipe. His companion smoked a cigarette in a meerschau holder.

"The theatre?" Brooke queried.

"I hope not. No, I don't think so. However, we'll see."

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Block after block was covered at a good pace. A cool, refreshing breeze was blowing from the north, straight in their faces. One theatre after another, with crowds about the brilliantly lighted doorway and a throng entering, was left behind—the Knickerbocker, the Casino, the Empire—and still Mumford and his mate kept on.

But at the next corner they turned in, and Brooke and Moore following found themselves in a long, narrow, marble-floored bar-room, aglare with electrics. Along one side was a bar, sumptuously ornamented and backed by high ornatly-framed mirrors. Along the other side were marble-topped tables, placed over against a continuous red leather-cushioned bench, after the manner of a Parisian café.

Several of the tables were occupied, and before the bar men stood in groups. One of these Mumford and the man in the light suit joined. Brooke and Moore edged in close beside them and gave an order to the bartender.

Then, for the first time, they got a glimpse of Mumford's companion's face. It was narrow, almost peaked, and clearly Israelitish. A small dark moustache and a pair of nose glasses adorned it. From Mumford's features the bloated florid appearance of the night before had gone, and Brooke, striving to

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find excuse for Annette Colby's strange, if but temporary, infatuation, discovered it, he thought, in the fearlessness of the fellow's eyes—the straight, almost aristocratic, shapeliness of his nose, and the square firmness of his cleft chin. Assuredly, his face belied his character; for he was a well-looking young Englishman, now that he was sober, and his figure was that of the trained athlete.

In the group that these two had joined there was one man who stood out prominently by reason of his physique and his voice. He was an inch or two over six feet in height and proportionately broad-shouldered, and his voice was at once thunderous, reverberating and penetrant. Incidentally he was middle-aged, low-browed and heavy-jowled.

"No, she ain't the *Niagara* nor she ain't a tug neither," he was saying; "she's a good two hundred ton yacht, that's what she is, and she can go some. Tommy here's seen her. He's been aboard her. He knows."

Tommy's voice was less strident. Whatever his comment was, it did not reach either Brooke or Moore.

"I can have my man fetch her 'round for you fellows, any day you say."

Some one asked a question.

"Why, I thought you knowed that," came the reply, spoken as though the speaker were roaring

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into the teeth of a howling gale. "She's over to Philadelphi'. Lays there off the foot of Washington Avenue."

For a little there was more or less general conversation among the other four, including Mumford; but they spoke in low tones. Then, crashing into the murmur, came:

"About when do you calculate to need her?"

It was Mumford who answered, and his answer was echoed immediately in a fog-horn volume.

"To-night!" bellowed the big fellow, irritably. "Why didn't you say so then? What the devil's the use o' takin' up my time over the thing? The *Gertie B* is a flyer all right, but she ain't a *aëroplane*, nor a Pennsylvania locomotive, and she can't make the run between Sleepytown and Wideawakeville in any couple of hours or so."

Someone in the party ordered a fresh round of drinks, and the bartender was busy removing the used glasses and replacing them with others, when Moore, pushing in between the loud-voiced person and the man for whom he entertained an all-consuming hatred, observed, with a repression that was admirable:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but do I understand that you want to charter a yacht?"

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The big fellow fell back and gave him his place, while Mumford, half suspicious, half resentful at the interruption, scowled. For a heart-beat no one answered. Then it was the sharp-visaged Israelite who spoke:

"No," he said, with a side glance at Mumford, "we are looking for a balloon."

Everybody guffawed. The average man would have been disconcerted, but Moore, his face serious, came a step nearer.

"Yacht or balloon," he returned, with the utmost gravity, "it makes no difference to me. I'll supply you with either."

The laugh was not repeated. Mumford scowled again; but this time it was at his friend, whose discomfiture was apparent.

"We did want a yacht," he said, frankly, "this gentleman's yacht; but it seems it isn't available just now. How soon could we go aboard the one you offer?"

"I'll have steam up in an hour for you," Moore volunteered.

"Where is she?"

"Off the New York Yacht Club station, foot of East Twenty-third Street."

"What size yacht?"

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"Five hundred tons."

"Is she coaled and provisioned?" Mumford enquired.

"For how long do you want her?" asked Brooke, in turn.

"Possibly for a week."

"She's coaled and provisioned, all right."

"And the price?"

Moore turned to Brooke, who was an interested listener. It was as if he wished a suggestion from him, and Brooke, quick to catch the idea, shrugged his shoulders, implying that Moore could make his own terms. The others noted the pantomime.

"Seven hundred and fifty for the week," he ventured, "for everything."

Then the Hebraic youth intervened.

"We don't want to buy your boat," he observed, derisively. "We're not Vanderbilts nor Astors."

Moore ignored him, his gaze fixed questioningly upon Mumford.

"That's beyond our limit," the latter said, simply. His accent and intonation were distinctly British, with a slight suggestion of the cockney.

"What is your limit?" Brooke asked. He was willing to let them have the yacht for nothing, rather than lose the chance of getting Mumford

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aboard of her. "What did this gentleman ask for his?"

The big man drained his glass and thundered:

"If they'll wait a day they can have the *Gertie B* for three hundred."

"We can't wait," said Mumford, decisively, "any more than we can pay what our friend here asks. I fancy there must be other yachts in the market."

"What will you pay?" Moore persisted. "I'm not unreasonable. The *Amaryllis* is a first-rate craft, turbine engines and very speedy. She can do twenty-two knots without a jar. She's furnished like a palace and carries a French *chef* that the owner bribed away from Delmonico."

"Five hundred cash, when we go aboard," Mumford offered. "There you are! Take it or leave it."

"Done!" cried Moore. "You're on."

Five minutes more at one of the side tables and the details were arranged. Mumford could not give the exact hour at which he would sail. Everything was to be in readiness, however, at eleven o'clock. Between that time and dawn he and his party would come aboard; and then the *Amaryllis* was to get under weigh at once, with her nose toward the open sea.

"How many in the party?" the Chicagoan asked.

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“ Four.”

Feigning lack of interest Moore turned his gaze across the narrow barroom, and lifted his glass, which, up to this time, had remained untouched.

“ Stag, I presume? ” he said, nonchalantly.

Mumford paused with a high ball at his lips.

“ No,” he replied, “ two gentlemen and—two ladies. One of the ladies, my wife, is an invalid.”

CHAPTER XV

ABOARD THE "AMARYLLIS"

OUT on Broadway once again, Moore led the way northward. It was now nine o'clock, and the thoroughfare was less thronged.

"I didn't know you owned a yacht," Brooke remarked, as he fell into step beside his friend.

"I don't," was "Jackie Boy's" laconic rejoinder. For a moment he was silent; then he vomited a torrent of vituperation, mingled with strange oaths that smacked of Filipino tutelage—"Profanity in Manila wrappers," Brooke called it.

"The dastardly coward means to kidnap the girl," he concluded, a world of loathing in his tone. "That's clear enough. My God! How fortunate we followed him! Now we can block his game."

From the Knickerbocker Hotel, Moore telephoned Annette Colby at the Saint Regis. It was not without some difficulty that he got her on the wire, seeing that she was very wary, and had left directions that no one was to know she was a guest of the house. The name Moore, however, proved to be the password, as it had been when Brooke 'phoned in the afternoon.

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Now "Jackie Boy" simply advised her to be still more wary. She was not to be lured from the hotel that night on any pretext. He refused to explain, but told her that everything depended on her obeying his instructions. She promised, but admitted she was dying of curiosity to know why he made such a request, and made it so imperatively.

He next called up the Waldorf-Astoria and asked for Mr. Walter Paddock. The answer came that he was not in his room, but that they would "page" him. But Moore could not wait for this process. A minute later he and Brooke were driving down to the Subway station. In less than three minutes they had alighted at Thirty-third Street, and were running the two long blocks to Fifth Avenue.

"Paddock owns the *Amaryllis*," Moore had explained. "I know he isn't using her. She's been lying off East Twenty-third Street for a month. Once in a while he gives a dinner aboard of her; but now that he has bought a balloon the yacht's neglected."

Walter Paddock, however, was not to be found in the hotel.

"He made an engagement to meet me here at ten, you remember," Brooke reminded his friend. "He'll show up then, I suppose."

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But Moore was in no mood to wait. He was restlessly anxious to have all arrangements made, so that, as he expressed it, there would be "no slip-up." He, therefore, telephoned to the Yacht Club station to find out whether Paddock was on the yacht. As it happened, Hartley, the sailing master of the *Amaryllis*, was in the office at the moment, and came to the instrument. Moore and he were old friends. Briefly matters were explained to him, and he agreed to have steam up by eleven, but he could not leave the anchorage, he made clear, without orders from the owner. Moore promised that he should have the orders by that time.

Then Moore and Brooke found a table in the café, and sat down with some impatience to await Paddock's arrival.

"I have been wondering," Brooke said, as he lighted a cigarette, "whether matters always move so swiftly in New York. It seems to me that I have been in a veritable whirl ever since I set foot in the city."

"We have certainly been going some to-day," his companion admitted, "that's true enough. But I'm afraid that our planned adventure for to-night is going to peter out. That cockney blackguard, you know, spoke of his wife as an invalid. Now what

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puzzles me is whether he meant Miss Colby, whom he proposes to kidnap and bring aboard the yacht insensible, or whether he really has a wife whom he wishes to get out of New York, drop in the Bay, or something. One thing is certain, he won't kidnap Miss Colby, now that she is on her guard. And if that was his game, and it fails, he is pretty sure not to want the yacht; and we'll have our disappointment for our pains."

Brooke nodded.

"Still," Moore continued, "we shall carry out our end of the contract on the chance that it isn't Miss Colby he is planning to run away with. All I want is to get him aboard that boat. Then we'll rope off a ring on deck, and there'll be one of the prettiest bare-knuckle fights the crew of the *Amaryllis* ever looked at; and I'll be in it."

"I'd like to have a go at Mumford myself," said Brooke, smiling. "It would give me the utmost pleasure to distort that straight nose of his and rip open that cleft in his chin."

Walter Paddock arrived a little before ten. He and Stevie Suydam, whose horse had been beaten out by a nose in the Pembroke Handicap at Jamaica that afternoon, had got back late from the track, and had been dining with Neeley Van Dam at the Yale Club.

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In a few hurried words Moore told him what he had done, and what he still desired.

"Like a shot, old man," Paddock agreed cordially. "Take her for a month if you like, or for a year. Yachting as a sport is obsolete. I'm going to sell the tub or give her away."

Then he turned breezily to Brooke.

"You're in on the cloud tour, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid not, if you'll excuse me," was the answer. "You see, this enterprise of Moore's is a joint matter, in a way. I'm sorry; I should have liked——"

"Oh, all right," Paddock interrupted nonchalantly. "Some other time, dear boy. Besides, the prevailing winds have changed, and I doubt whether the trip is going to be a success. Hope you like the tub. She's a fairly good one, as yachts go."

Someone, across the room, was beckoning him, and he ran away.

Twenty-third Street at its eastern terminus steals a hundred yards or more from the East River, and spreads into a broad-planked plaza, across the eastern end of which the brown-painted frame walls of the Greenpoint ferry-house form a barrier shutting from view the narrow stream and the sordid factories on

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the opposite shore. At the northern end of this barrier a low, white-painted, peak-roofed structure guards the sloping descent to the floating landing stage of the New York Yacht Club, and serves as office and rendezvous as well. Here the river washes into a sort of basin or slip, its northern side formed by a long, double-decked recreation pier and its shore-end adorned by one of the newest of the city's public bath-houses.

A full moon, sailing high in a cloudless sky, was shedding over this scene a lustre so bright as to pale the yellow glow of artificial lights and throw all objects, animate or inanimate, into sharp, vivid relief. In this luminous white flood the tall, square-shouldered figure of Jack Moore stood out in marked prominence as he paced impatiently back and forth along the railing which guarded the edge of the planking.

It was now after midnight, and there were as yet no signs of the Mumford party, but the ex-soldier had not given up hope. Down below, beside the landing-stage, the *Amaryllis's* launch, with a white-uniformed sailor in charge, still waited, rising and falling with the gently undulating pulse of the river, her highly polished brass funnel brilliant in the moonlight.

Brooke, in spite of his protests, had been made

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to see, half an hour before, that his place was really aboard the yacht, and had reluctantly allowed himself to be ferried there, chiding a fate which denied him the privilege of participating in every incident of a game that, if it were to be played at all, promised to be exciting in every detail. So while Moore impatiently paced the wharf Brooke fretfully strode up and down the deck of the yacht, his eyes ever upon the shore and the tall, square-shouldered figure of his friend as he moved to and fro in the silver radiance of the night.

Tiring at length of his tramp, Brooke arranged a cane chair in a position which would give him an uninterrupted view, and, dropping into it, lighted a cigar. The night was very still. On the breeze, which continued from the northwest, there came to him at intervals from a yacht anchored near, on which a late revel was in progress, the music of light laughter. At longer intervals there came the pulsing throb of a ferry-boat's engines, and the rushing surge of waters as it came or went. These sounds, the periodic striking of the yacht's bell, measuring the half-hours, and the incessant soft lapping of wavelets against the side, were all that disturbed the silence.

The peace of it, aided by the wavering spectacle of glinting silver moon-wrought arabesques on the

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steely stretch of water across which he gazed, lulled and relaxed him. His eyelids grew heavy, and his chin sank lower and lower. Drowsiness overcame him. He dozed.

When, suddenly startled, every faculty alert, he sprang up and leaned over the rail, two bells were sounding, and a launch, with five passengers grouped together in the stern, was at the yacht's side.

The moon was hidden now by fleecy clouds, but Brooke had little difficulty in distinguishing at least three of the party. Mumford and his companion of the early evening were on their feet and bending over an inert, cloak-wrapped figure. Moore, still sitting, was stretched across the side, one hand grasping a stanchion of the accommodation ladder. He saw, too, that the cloak-wrapped figure was reclining against a woman darkly clad, her head lowered.

All this he took in instantly, while he reproached himself for his weakness in drowsing. But he was wide awake now and ready for any emergency. A plan of action had been outlined by Moore and himself, and all that remained was for him to carry out his part of it. According to this arrangement he was, for the present at least, to remain in the background. Later he would have his chance in the action.

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Now he heard Moore calling:

"Captain Hartley! A man there at the gangway, please, to help with this lady."

This lady! It was not easy to guess who "this lady" was under the circumstances. How they could have arranged to kidnap Annette Colby after the warning she had received Brooke could not imagine. But, whoever it was, they had either drugged or anæstheticized her, for as Mumford and his companion lifted her she appeared a dead weight, her veiled head falling limply against the latter's shoulder.

Captain Hartley, standing at the gangway, called a name, and one of the sailors started forward, but Brooke was too quick for him. Already he was at the head of the ladder with arms outstretched. A second more, and the shoulders of the cloak-wrapped figure were in his embrace, and, with all the tenderness of a mother handling her child, he was lifting her gently, but securely—taking her indeed quite out of the hands of the others, who, apparently unused to climbing swaying stairways, were having all they could do to mount from the launch to the deck.

For a moment only he held her, but in that brief interval there recurred to him a fleeting sense of a familiar perfume, mingling with yet rising above the

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sweetly volatile odor of chloroform; and with it came back vividly, as if in veritable repetition, his experience of three nights before, when he had carried the fainting form of Constance Colby from the wrecked Pullman sleeper to the little Indiana farmhouse.

Reluctantly he yielded his burden to Mumford, who stood for a moment hesitant, if not bewildered.

"Mr. Brooke!"

It was Moore who spoke.

Brooke respectfully touched his hat. This was part of the prearranged programme, though in detail it had been suddenly altered.

"Show Mr. Mumford and his wife to the owner's cabin."

Again Brooke touched his hat. In the period of his enforced waiting aboard he had thoroughly familiarized himself with the lay of the yacht and the arrangement of the lower deck.

"Mr. Brooke," Moore continued, turning to Mumford, "is the chief steward of the *Amaryllis*."

"This way, sir!"

Brooke led the way below, and Mumford, staggering a little under the weight he carried, followed; while back of him came the darkly-clad woman Brooke had seen in the launch.

At the door of the owner's cabin the guide halted.

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Electric bulbs lighted the interior, showing a sumptuous little *salon*, all white and gold. On one side extended a broad couch, upholstered in gold and yellow brocade, and piled high with cushions covered in the same fabric.

Upon this Mumford deposited his charge.

"Now," he said, a trifle sharply, addressing the woman in the dark clothes, "I leave her in your care, and I warn you to be less generous with your sedatives. It is necessary to quiet her at times, I know, but there is never any need for this sort of thing."

Brooke listened, interested, and in a way amused. This, then, was the pretense. The so-called Mrs. Mumford was a sufferer, supposedly, from hysteria or some kindred malady, and on occasions she became violent. For that reason she required a nurse; and this little woman, red-faced, black-haired and looking the very opposite of the part, save that she was demurely garbed, had been engaged to play the rôle.

Now she was placing a pillow beneath her patient's head, which Mumford had carelessly let lie flat. But neither the thick veil which enveloped her features nor the cloak which wrapped her did the nurse make any immediate move to take off.

"There's a key to this door, I suppose," Mumford suggested turning to Brooke. "I want to lock it

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on the outside. And there's a bell here, of course. Then if Miss Murphy requires anything she can ring, and I'll answer."

"Yes, there's a key, sir," Brooke returned, "but unfortunately it has been mislaid; and as for the bell, it rings in my quarters instead of yours, which are the next adjoining."

Mumford's annoyance was evident.

"What kind of a yacht is this?" he demanded angrily. "What right have you to give me a room that can't be locked. It must be locked. Look about, man, and find the key, or find some other that will fit."

"There's a bolt on the inside," Brooke ventured. "How will that do? Then, if Miss Murphy wants you, she can rap on the dividing partition. As I said before, the key cannot be found, and each room has a distinctly different lock."

Mumford bit his lip in irritation.

"I'll see about this," he muttered. "In the meantime, Miss Murphy, we'll have to accept Mr. Brooke's suggestion. Bolt the door, and see to it that Mrs. Mumford does not open it. And now," he added, speaking to Brooke again, "I'll have a few words with that agent, if he hasn't gone ashore; which, seeing that he hasn't been paid yet, I don't suppose he has."

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On deck they found Moore, sitting in the cane chair which Brooke had occupied, and to him Mumford made strenuous complaint. But Moore evaded all responsibility. He was sorry, but it was the province of the chief steward to look after such matters. When Mr. Mumford had agreed to charter the yacht there was no stipulation regarding locks and keys. He had put the yacht at Mr. Mumford's service, and there his responsibility ended.

"And now," he ended, "when you have paid over five hundred good dollars of the coin of the realm you may give the order to up anchor and away."

"I'll not pay a cent until that key is found," Mumford declared stubbornly.

"Then the *Amaryllis* will lie just where she is," returned Moore, with equal stubbornness.

Mumford walked five steps aft and then walked five steps back again.

"This is a damn outrage," he snarled. "I know bally well there's a key somewhere that will fit that door."

"Then you'd better bally well find it," returned Moore calmly.

"For half a farthing," shouted the Englishman, stirred now to the boiling point, "I'd break your blooming head, young man."

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"And for a great deal less than that," said Moore, with irritating calmness, as he deliberately got to his feet, "I'd chuck you over that rail into the river."

At this juncture the Hebraic youth, still wearing his light woollen suit and Panama hat, loomed out of the shadows.

"Oh, I guess not," he murmured, "I guess not. I don't think there'll be anything doing of that sort just yet, you know."

Brooke, who had been quietly listening, took this as his cue. Without so much as a word he placed himself at the speaker's side, and his hand fell upon the fellow's wrist, gripping it hard, and twisting it until its owner, thus taken by surprise, squirmed in pain.

"Will you keep out of it?" he muttered quietly, almost in a whisper. "Or do you want a swim, too?"

Even as he spoke, Mumford's fist flashed out straight for the Chicagoan's jaw, but Moore, stepping back lightly, and parrying at the same moment, evaded it. Back of the attempt the Englishman had thrown the whole weight of his body, and his blow, failing to land he staggered a step forward, his balance threatened.

In that instant he lowered his guard, and Moore, availing himself of the opportunity, swung first with

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his right and then with his left for the fellow's face. The double impact sounded almost as one, so close were the blows, and Mumford went reeling back, dazed and blinded, against the rail.

All the accumulated hatred of the afternoon and night was compounded in the ex-army officer's onslaught. All his restraint of the past few hours had only whetted his appetite for vengeance on this coward who had warred against a woman. Calmly self-possessed as he had seemed, his muscles had ached for the fray, and now that the sought for occasion had arrived—now that the quarrel was on through the enemy's own initiative—and those ravening arms and fists were unleashed, mercy fled beyond hail.

He followed up his advantage in a frenzied whirl, raining blow after blow upon the wretch as he strove to recover; sending him, eventually, clear of his feet, and dropping him bleeding and unconscious to the deck.

Throughout this quick, fierce attack Brooke maintained, with increasing pressure, his grip upon the Englishman's ally; and when it was over he found that he had forced him to his knees, where, with agonized features, he now pleaded piteously for mercy. With an expression of contempt that was almost loathing, he released him.

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Moore was wiping his hands on his handkerchief, and Captain Hartley, who had arrived in time to witness the finish of the one-sided combat, stood smiling beside him.

"Were you trying to kill him, Mr. Moore?" he asked, in a tone of such simplicity that Moore laughed aloud.

"God knows I felt like it," he answered.

Brooke smilingly offered his congratulations.

"It was bully," he said appreciatively; "the blackguard hadn't a chance for a minute. And now," he added, "what do you propose? Shall we send him and his friend ashore, or——"

"Not on your life!" returned Moore. "I haven't nearly completed his punishment. I want him carried below now and locked up. You have one room with a key to the lock, haven't you?" And he grinned significantly at Brooke.

"And the other fellow?"

"Put him in another room."

Brooke touched his hat with mock deference.

"Ay, ay, sir," he laughed.

"And," inquired Captain Hartley, "do we stop here, or do we get under weigh?"

"Let her go," Moore commanded. "We'll have a sail down the bay, at any rate."

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A white-clad sailor, cap in hand, was at the captain's elbow.

"If you please, sir," he reported, pulling his forelock, "the bell from the owner's cabin has been ringing furiously, sir, for the last five minutes."

CHAPTER XVI

DISASTER

THE *Amaryllis's* swiftly revolving turbines, working silently, but effectively, were driving her, a white streak, through the darkly glittering waters of the Narrows, her sharp prow pointed seaward. The wind had veered to the northeast and was churning the upper bay into angry waves, which broke into spray against the yacht's port bow as she held steadily her course between the frowning forts of the grim, encroaching shores.

Brooke and Moore, seated together on the after-deck, discussed a situation which had in a way begun to threaten more or less serious consequences.

"Not that I am in the least alarmed," Moore was saying, struggling meanwhile to get a light for his cigar in a half gale which quenched the match flame almost before it had started; "but they may, under certain circumstances, give us a lot of annoyance."

Brooke passed his lighted cigar to his friend.

"There," he said, "get your fire from that." And as Moore placed the glowing end to the point of

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his own Havana, the speaker added: "It doesn't seem to me that Mumford would have much standing in a court of law."

"It's hard to tell," the other replied. "I don't know how those things go in Honolulu, but in this country pull counts for a lot, and it seems that insufferable little Sheeny is none other than Rosenstein, a nephew of Ike Stern, the criminal lawyer, who, by some hook or crook, has been able to sway the police department and the courts for years on years. Right doesn't count for much in such a case. Might is the winner, and Ikey Stern represents might."

"But there are surely certain laws which cannot be defied with impunity. This fellow, Mumford, and his people, are crooks."

"What have they done?" Moore asked, quietly. Brooke's eyes flashed.

"What have they done!" he repeated, indignantly. "What haven't they done?"

"Well," the Chicagoan pursued, "I doubt if a single charge could be brought that would hold. He married Miss Colby. That is no crime, God knows, under the statute. The fact that he is what he is, makes it so to us, but the code doesn't include it. He struck his wife, knocked her off her horse, and took

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her pearl necklace. She would swear to that, I suppose, but there were no witnesses. You could testify as to finding her, but you know only what she told you. Besides, you really robbed him of that necklace, which, as it was his wife's property, he had a better right to than you had. As for the knockout drops, no jury would believe your tale about that. They would say you drank too much. And as for this other fellow, whom you believe to be connected in some way with the Mumford family—the big fellow who shared in stealing the bag of money—you can't prove any connection, and, even if you could, Mumford is not responsible for the acts of his relatives or friends."

Brooke made no reply; but leaned forward, gazing across the rail at the rush of waters, in which the moon, pale now under a veil of light cloud, was reflected in pallid streaks.

"On the other hand," Moore went on, "see what we have done! We agreed to charter this yacht to Mumford for a week. He wanted to take his wife for a week's cruise. So far, so good. He brings his invalid wife aboard. He complains because there is no key to the stateroom, and I forthwith proceed to pummel him; knock him senseless, and then make prisoners of himself and his friend, and sail off with

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them. There's material for a pretty black indictment of several counts in that little story."

Brooke sat up, suddenly.

"Ah, but the woman!" he cried, excitement in his tone. "You have forgotten about her. Who is she? That's the question. Is she Miss Colby? We don't think she is. Is she a former wife—his real wife? If so, he's a bigamist, and he can be sent up for that."

But Moore only smiled.

"That 'if' of yours is a pretty big one," he said, indulgence in his tone, "but even granting that he is a bigamist—I don't concede it, and I very much doubt it—what has that to do with us? It doesn't let us out, does it? We are not officers of the law to kidnap bigamists and bring them to justice."

For a moment Brooke's fingers tapped nervously on the arms of his cane chair. Then he stood up and leant against the rail, facing Moore.

"You're rather a wet blanket, aren't you?" he asked.

The ex-captain in Uncle Sam's army blew a cloud of smoke into the gale, which carried it off astern.

"You may call me that," he returned, nonchalantly, "but I have been stating facts, just the

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same. We might as well recognize the situation."

Brooke laughed a little grimly.

"This is your picnic, you know," he said. "I am only a willing accomplice."

For a moment Moore was silent. Then he said:

"I don't regret it. I'd do it again. Only it isn't fair to you to drag you in, without letting you know just how things stand. If you want to get out of it, I'll have the yacht run in at a Staten Island landing, and you can return to——"

The interruption that checked him was almost angry.

"Stop!" Brooke roared, indignation hot within him; "I won't listen to you. That's the unkindest suggestion you ever made."

"I beg your pardon, then. I didn't mean it that way. But you see I know you can't afford to have your affairs interfered with just now, and I thought, maybe——"

"You haven't any right to think. Everything you have done has my full approval; except your reflection on my loyalty and—and—and sportsmanship," he added, a little irritably.

Moore reached out his hand.

"Come! Shake!" he invited, "and forgive me, old chap. I apologize again. Not another word, I

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promise." And the two men clasped hands in token of their renewed pact.

"Now, maybe, you wouldn't mind saying what you make out of this woman business," Brooke pursued, as he dropped into his chair again. "Who is the lady that was brought aboard masked and muffled?"

"I don't know," Moore replied, in candid confession. "When I went below, as I told you, in response to the announcement that the bell was ringing, that hag of a play-acting trained nurse had the door bolted, and refused to open it to anyone but Mumford. I told her Mumford was engaged, and that I would get her anything she required, but she said it was not urgent. Then she informed me that Mrs. Mumford was asleep, and bade me request Mumford not to disturb her until morning. So as to the lady's identity you are quite as able to judge as I am."

"But what do you think?" Brooke insisted.

"I think it isn't Annette Colby. What do *you* think?"

"I don't see how it can be she, all things considered, and yet——"

"Well?"

Brooke shrugged his shoulders. Then, after a little pause, he said:

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"I can't see why he should want to kidnap any other woman."

"Nor can I," returned Moore, "and that's the puzzle of it. However, we'll know in the morning."

The young man from Honolulu looked, but did not voice, a question.

"In the morning," he continued, "I'm going to have a talk with the lady. The best thing for her after her chloroforming is sleep. So as Mumford is where he cannot annoy her, I propose to let her have a good night's rest undisturbed."

"By the way," Brooke began again, after a moment's silence, "did your friend Rosenstein threaten?"

"All kinds of things."

Again the conversation lulled.

"I don't suppose you care to state just what your plans are, since you haven't volunteered to do so," Brooke hinted, presently.

Moore laughed.

"To tell the truth," he replied, "they are a little hazy—foggy, like the weather we're running into. I did think a little of a leisurely cruise up the coast, keeping these two scoundrels prisoners until they are ready to make terms with me. But a good deal depends on what the lady says in the morning." He

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glanced at his watch. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "it's nearly two o'clock. I didn't hear three bells. Suppose we turn in for a few hours. There's no use sitting here. It's damp; and it's confoundedly chilly, too." He shivered as he stood up.

The fog had thickened, and the northeast wind swept it in dense clouds across the deck.

But when Brooke, snug in his berth, wooed sleep, sleep proved coy. His mind was actively engaged with other matters; and the goddess Slumber resented jealously this division of his attentions. For, pleased as Brooke was to engage in this adventure, the possibility of being a week or more at sea, while the ownership of the hundred thousand dollars, now locked in the Waldorf-Astoria's steel fireproof safe, remained unsettled, did not altogether appeal to him.

The ownership was his quest. Already he had neglected it too long, he feared. Every day now increased the possibility of misunderstanding, should the owner appear and claim it. As a matter of fact he had taken no actual steps whatever toward finding the rightful possessor of that fortune. He had permitted himself to be led by the maunderings of a proved criminal to believe that the money had its origin in some nefarious scheme—was the loot of

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some gang of swindlers—and he had been guardedly, secretly indeed, proceeding—if what little he had done could be so called—on this hypothesis, rather than going boldly into the public glare, declaring his find and clamoring for the loser.

His first duty was to have advertised it. He saw this now, and almost regretted that he had not turned the bag and its precious contents over to the police. It was all a mistake from first to last—this assumption of the task of finding the owner, alone and unassisted; the taking of a name not his own; his silently permitting his uncle to claim and bury another man's body under the conviction that it was his; but, worst of all, since he had undertaken the responsibility, was his dawdling, whereas he should have been energetically at work, leaving no stone unturned to discover the heir to this rich heirloom.

He saw this all, very clearly now, and reproached himself because of his temperament, which was always leading him into just such errors of judgment. It was his craving for the romance, adventure and excitement of real life that was responsible for it all. Some men were afflicted with a craving for strong drink, and could not resist it. In his case the insatiable appetite took this form.

For a long while he tossed about in his narrow

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berth, turning first this way and then that, while all the time these thoughts hammered at his conscience, chiding and rebuking and driving away sleep from his tired eyelids.

He heard eight bells strike. It was four o'clock; and still he had not slept.

When subsequently he came to think it all over, he realized that he must have fallen asleep almost immediately, for that was the last he remembered of time, and he did remember dreaming that he was in the railroad wreck again and that he was carrying Constance Colby in his arms through hissing steam and showers of sparks.

This was just before he awakened abruptly to find himself on the floor of the stateroom, close to the opposite wall from his berth, against which he had been thrown with such violence that an aching left arm made itself evident to his senses, even in the midst of his sudden and startled surprise.

As he sat up, rubbing his elbow instinctively, there fell upon his ears a hiss of escaping steam, a bedlam of excited voices, and a patter and scurry of hurrying feet; and with these sounds came the consciousness of accident to the yacht.

Just how he managed to find and slip into his clothes in the briefest of all brief instants, and in the

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dark as well, he could never distinctly recall. His recollection was that immediately following his recognition of danger he was running, fully dressed, along the narrow passageway from his own state-room, which lay well astern, toward that of the owner, which lay amidships.

What had happened he could only surmise. He saw instantly, however, that whatever it was, it had cut off the electrical connections, for the whole main deck was in total darkness.

As he hurried forward shrill voices, raised in hysterical screams, rose above the mingled clamor that penetrated from the deck overhead and the engine-room below, and he realized that the women passengers were still in their cabins, panic-stricken, and from unfamiliarity with the vessel, unable to escape.

A second later he had groped to their door, which he found ajar, and, halting on the threshold and commanding his voice to a calm which he did not feel, he spoke:

"It is all right. There is no immediate danger; but you had better come with me at once."

At the first sound of his voice the screaming ceased; and now he was conscious of the two women crowding upon him. A trembling hand fell on his arm, but there was no word spoken. Thus attached

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—the second woman clinging to the first—he led them to the companionway and thence to the deck, where the dripping fog enveloped everything in a grey pall.

It was impossible to distinguish even the outline of objects two paces distant; but the excited voices of officers and men, and the bustle of hasty movement, were distinctly audible.

“Wait here!” Brooke commanded. “Don’t move a step away, or I may not be able to find you again.”

The women, too terror-stricken to speak, huddled together at the top of the companion steps. In the dark their faces had been so obscure that Brooke had even now, as he moved away, little more idea of the so-called Mrs. Mumford than when he had seen her figure cloak-wrapped and her face masked in veiling.

Three or four steps forward, and he encountered one of the sailors.

“What is it?” he questioned, breathlessly.

“We’ve been run down, sir,” came the answer. “Our starboard side is stove, and the water’s got to the engine-room.”

The list to starboard was now very perceptible.

Brooke pressed further forward. From the bridge, almost above him, he heard the hoarse voice of the sailing master, roaring through a megaphone:



"THE WOMEN HUDDLED TOGETHER AT THE TOP OF THE COMPANION STEPS."

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“Ship ahoy!”

From across the waters, through the fog, came an answering voice. Then:

“Stand by to give as—sist—ance!”

Brooke heard the rattle of blocks and tackle, and dimly he discerned near him a group of sailors, and then, more dimly still, he saw a dark object sway outward and descend to the accompaniment of sharp cries, commands and responses.

It was one of the boats being lowered.

At the same instant a hand clutched his elbow, and Moore, in hurried, anxious tones, was asking:

“Where are the women? Where are Mumford and Rosenstein?”

“The women are all right,” Brooke answered, with a quietness that surprised himself. “I have them here. I don’t know about the men.”

“My God!” cried Moore, desperately. “We’re sinking. Don’t you know that? It’s a question if we can keep afloat five minutes longer. A coasting steamer rammed us.”

Brooke had not been deceived as to the magnitude of the disaster. The hissing of steam had warned him that the water had got to the yacht’s fires, and he knew that an explosion was not unlikely to result.

“Mumford and Rosenstein were locked up. You

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know that, of course," he said, with the same surprising deliberation. "Is it possible that no one has released them?"

"They were in those two forward rooms on the starboard side, weren't they?"

Moore asked the question in a tone of nervous trepidation.

"Yes. The two rooms farthest forward."

"Good Lord!" the Chicagoan murmured. "It was about there we were cut down. The bow of the steamer sliced into us like a knife into cheese."

Brooke started.

"Here!" he cried, fired by a sudden resolve. "You put the two women into the boat. They're standing at the top of the companionway. I'm going below to see if I can't get those fellows out."

He had turned, hastily, when he felt Moore's hand on his shoulder.

"Stop!" commanded the ex-army officer. "It's foolhardy to attempt it. She's sinking by the head. Look at this deck. Those cabins are flooded by now, and are liable to duck under at any moment."

But Brooke had torn away, and was already out of sight under the canopy of fog.

At the head of the companionway the two women waylaid him in terror-stricken apprehension.

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"A boat has been lowered," he flung at them, as he plunged down the steps; "they are coming for you now."

And then he was between decks again, hurrying through the saloon, barking his shins against chairs and tables in the darkness, but rushing eagerly on, alert to the importance of every pulsing throb of time.

The door to the forward passage from the saloon was closed, but his groping hand found the knob, and he flung it open, to meet a rush of water that surged high above his ankles and threatened his footing.

He would have waded down the ever-deepening descent—for the *Amaryllis* was now down at the bow to an angle of twenty degrees or more, and perceptibly listed to starboard as well—but a veritable barrier of riven and splintered wood blocked his progress.

His hands, stretched forward in the dark, came in contact with the wrenched, cracked and distorted walls of the starboard cabins, flung out in a mass of broken and split boarding and jammed quite across the narrow passageway.

"Mumford! Rosenstein! Mumford! Rosenstein!"

His voice lifted in high-pitched appeal rang into the darkness, above the hissing of steam, the murmur

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of waters and the echoes from the deck overhead. But there was no response.

Again he called; and with like result. The darkness was impenetrable, but at that moment his fingers found a match loose in his coat pocket, and he struck it against the jamb of the doorway in which he had halted.

For an instant only it flamed, the draught from the great gaping hole in the yacht's side, which was momentarily revealed, quenching it before the stick was ignited. But in that instant Brooke got a glimpse of the havoc wrought. The two staterooms had been wrecked disastrously. Partition was jammed against partition, torn and rent and distorted, while the furniture, overturned, crushed and pounded to kindling, was hardly recognizable. Mattresses and bedclothing not pinned beneath the encroaching water by the riven woodwork, floated on the ever rising surface.

There was no sign, though, so far as he could see in that hasty survey, of the bodies of Mumford and Rosenstein. Yet that they were there, beneath the wreckage, he had no doubt.

He had used his only match—there had been no time or thought in his hasty dressing for such impedimenta as match boxes—and he realized that it

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was useless to try further investigation in the pitch darkness. So, with the water at his waist, he plunged back through the now flooded saloon, gained at length the companion, and climbed, in breathless haste, to the deck.

The fog had lifted a little, and he saw a handful of the crew vaulting the rail to man the last of the yacht's boats. Captain Hartley had descended from the bridge and was directing the disembarkation. A hundred yards away the great black bulk of the coasting steamer loomed through the grey mist. On the darker grey waters that spread between, he could make out three crowded boats, disappearing one after the other under the veil of the fog.

"For God's sake, man," Moore was shouting, "hurry!"

Brooke, who recognized his friend now, standing beside the captain, required no urging.

He and Moore went over the rail together, and Captain Hartley, after one regretful glance backward along the deck of the beautiful vessel, followed them into the waiting boat.

"You—you found them?" questioned Moore, as the sailors, bending to their oars, caused the frail little cockleshell to dart away from the side of the fated *Amaryllis*.

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"No," Brooke replied, gravely. "I surely didn't. But, equally surely, nobody else will. Poor beggars! For any creature to have lived in the hell of those staterooms was a sheer impossibility."

After that, no one spoke for a time, and there was no sound, save the rhythmic splash of the oar blades, and the accompanying rhythm of the oars turning in the rowlocks.

Then, suddenly, across the silence, the voice of the captain fell in what seemed a reverberant wail.

"Oh, good God!"

At the same moment there came back over the waters that which sounded like a low, long, answering moan. All eyes had been fixed on the reeling yacht, and now, just as the fog settled down over her once more, in a heavy grey blanket, leaving nothing to be seen but a dim, shadowy streak, that streak was swallowed up; and the waters and the fog rolled together above it.

CHAPTER XVII

SURPRISE

THE coasting steamer, whose misfortune it had been to run down the *Amaryllis*, proved to be the *Franklin*, from Norfolk to New York, with a mixed cargo and half-a-dozen passengers. Her captain, a bluff, weather-beaten, grizzled veteran named Conway, greeted Captain Hartley as an old friend, invited him to his cabin, and was there closeted with him for the better part of an hour.

Brooke and Moore, meanwhile, were forced to submit to the curious inquiries of the *Franklin's* passengers, who, at the first shock of the collision, had rushed upon deck in alarm, and on discovering small damage to their vessel and no danger to themselves, had remained as interested spectators of the transfer of the *Amaryllis's* passengers and crew.

The two women from the yacht, suffering, it was said, from nervous shock, were already below when Brooke and Moore climbed aboard, and were now, according to the most talkative of the passengers, being ministered to by the ship's doctor.

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Neither of the young men was inclined to be communicative, and their answers to questions were for the most part monosyllabic. The sinking of the yacht was a disaster of sufficient magnitude in itself to be depressing, but the fatalities added a complication which was distinctly distressful.

Nor were their spirits lifted when, Captain Conway having at length finished his interview with Captain Hartley, they were in turn invited to the captain's cabin and put through a somewhat rigorous examination regarding the ill-fated Mumford and Rosenstein.

Captain Hartley, of course, had been very much in the dark regarding the quartette brought aboard the yacht by Moore, and he had told Captain Conway so. Moore, however, made a clean breast of the whole matter. But he was unable to explain with any degree of satisfaction why he had caused the yacht to leave her anchorage and go steaming out to sea and down the New Jersey coast with these two men, almost utter strangers to himself, locked up in cabins between decks. All he could say was that it was a sort of "third degree" measure.

"I hoped by this means," he added, "to wring a confession from Mumford that would free the girl he had married."

"But you must see, sir," commented the bluff old

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navigator, "that that was a very high-handed proceeding."

"I do see it," Moore returned frankly, with an air of contrition, "and now I would give everything I possess to undo what I did."

"And was no effort made to release your prisoners?"

Here Brooke interposed. Modestly enough he told of how he had gone below for this purpose, and what he had found.

Captain Conway grunted approval of the young man's courage, but frowned over the conclusion of his narrative. Then he inquired:

"Now about the ladies. Who are they?"

"We don't know," Moore volunteered.

"But you think one of them is the—the bride of this Mumford?"

"No, I don't," Brooke and Moore answered in concert.

The captain seemed a trifle confused.

"I don't understand," he went on. "I thought that was your idea—that he was kidnapping his wife, so to speak."

"We thought that was his intention," the Chicagoan explained, "but we were afterwards convinced otherwise. Neither of us has seen the lady

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well enough to say positively it is not she. You will remember that I told you she was brought aboard the yacht insensible and heavily veiled. Mr. Brooke, here, brought her and the other woman on deck after the collision, but it was so dark he could not see her, and though I conducted her to the boat which carried the two to your ship, I couldn't get sight of her face in the blackness of the fog. Besides, she was in hysterics, and though I spoke to her she gave me no answer."

For just a moment Captain Conway sat in silent meditation.

"I'll have them brought in here, if they're able to come," he declared, as his thumb pressed a bell on the edge of his chart table.

But they were not able to come. The ship's doctor announced that he had administered sedatives and that both women were sleeping.

Then the captain, leaning forward, took up a packet of papers that lay on his table before him.

"Mr. Brooke," he said quietly, "I have no desire to lessen the credit due you for your bravery in going below at the risk of your own life in order to release the two imprisoned men passengers, but someone had been there before you. Captain Hartley brought me a coat that one of his men had found, wedged, I believe,

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in the half-open door of the saloon. After shutting the door to prevent, as far as possible, the further flooding of the main deck, he carried this coat to the captain. In the pocket of it these papers were discovered. I propose now that you and Mr. Moore and myself look them over together."

The packet, for the most part, was made up of unreceipted bills, but there were two letters in it of abounding interest.

The first one appealed particularly to Brooke, who subsequently explained its meaning to Captain Conway. It was signed "Lucille," and though it bore no date it was not difficult for the young Honoluluian to fix correctly the occasion of its writing.

"Jim," it began, "you will be surprised to find the door locked, but I know you have your key with you. I have gone to find Jerry, and if all goes right we are off for the other side. There is a very much soused young man in the dining-room. You know what I mean. Everything depends on his not leaving the flat before noon to-morrow at the earliest. Keep him, and I'll see that you get a slice of what we get."

But the other letter, which was written on the letter paper of Stern & Blumenberg, addressed "Dear Jim," and signed "Simon Rosenstein," was

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of more general and immediate importance; and, while it cleared up certain hitherto obscure matters, it also propounded at least one new problem.

Captain Conway read it aloud, with Brooke and Moore bending interestedly over his shoulder, their eyes following the written words.

"Quigley has located the lady," it ran; "she is at the Holland House, and we shall have no difficulty in getting her. She'll fall to the ruse you proposed. Now, as to the yacht—I have arranged to have Captain Evans meet us this evening at half-past eight at the Albany. He has just the sort of boat we want, and he can be depended on to keep his mouth shut. My plan is to go by yacht to Charleston, and drive from there to a place I know, about ten miles back, where nobody in God's world will ever think of looking. There we can negotiate at our leisure. There is sure to be a big ransom offered, as you say. That is the only way you can possibly get anything out of this, as you know your marriage won't hold. Your lawful wife would be sure to turn up and make trouble. Meet me at Shanley's, Thirtieth Street, for dinner, at 7 sharp, and we will talk it over."

"The Holland House!" exclaimed Moore, when the last line had been read. "What does that mean?"

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"Miss Colby was certainly not at the Holland House," Brooke added. "That's a puzzler. Yet it was evidently Miss Colby they were after."

Captain Conway read the letter over again in silence.

"Well, boys," he said, with something approaching cheeriness, when he had finished, "this is pretty valuable confirmation of what you've told me. There's no question about the victims of the collision being scamps. This settles that. And I doubt that, as long as you have it in your possession, anyone will make trouble for you; but so far as this kidnapped lady is concerned you must both appear as co-conspirators with the precious pair that have gone to Davy Jones; and I should not be at all surprised if the lady's friends made it pretty warm for you."

Moore, however, gave no evidence of alarm, and Brooke, confident in his own honesty of purpose, smiled at the captain's prediction.

"I don't think," he said, with conviction, "that we'll have much difficulty. How long did the doctor say the women would be kept asleep?"

"He didn't say," returned the *Franklin's* chief executive, "but as soon as they are presentable I'll send for you, and we'll have a little party here."

It was broad daylight when Brooke and his friend

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reached the deck again. The fog had rolled away seaward, but there was a gentle rain falling, and the clouds hung low and threatening.

Captain Hartley was waiting for them.

"We're off Atlantic Highlands," he said. "In an hour and a half we'll be at Quarantine, and, unless I'm very much mistaken, we'll meet trouble there. At all events, we'll have to stand fire from the newspaper reporters."

"But how will they know?" Brooke asked, innocently.

Captain Hartley indicated the prong-like wires which pointed heavenward from the extremities of the masts.

"Wireless!" he said laconically.

"You mean——"

"That the whole story has been flashed ashore, and is already in every newspaper office in New York City."

Moore's face became very grave.

"By Gad!" he exclaimed, "I never thought of that. It's devilish awkward, isn't it? The papers will make a sensation of it, too. The death of Simon Rosenstein, Ikey Stern's nephew, will be a sensation in itself, and they'll dig into every detail."

"We'll learn more about Jim Mumford, I sup-

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pose," added Brooke, "than we would ever have learned otherwise."

"It's rotten!" Moore insisted, gloomily. "But one thing we must guard against—Annette Colby's name is to be kept out of it."

"Is it possible?" Brooke asked. "You won't find Captain Conway mincing matters. He'll tell a straight story; and he can't do that very well and leave out the chief actress. Besides, there's only one way to explain the presence of the lady from the Holland House. She was kidnapped in mistake for someone else. 'Who else?' the reporters will ask; and there you are."

Moore bit his lip in visible annoyance.

Captain Hartley, who had turned away for a moment to speak with his chief engineer, now rejoined them.

"I don't know how you feel," he said, "but I'm about famished. Pratt tells me that he has just had breakfast in the saloon, so I suggest that we go and do likewise."

The appetites of the young men were scarcely so insistent as the captain's, seeing that they were still mentally distressed over the accident and its consequences, but they followed him below, nevertheless, and made a brave endeavor to fortify themselves with

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steak and rolls and coffee against the ordeal which was promised them at Quarantine.

When, breakfast finished, they were making their exit from the saloon, a couple of loquacious passengers fell again upon Moore and the captain, but Brooke was fortunate enough to escape. Fearing a like fate, however, should he go on the upper deck, he began a tour of investigation below, hoping to discover some quiet, sequestered nook wherein he could avoid both questions and observation.

And seeking, he found a little library or writing-room which was quite deserted. Here he ensconced himself in a great high-backed leather-upholstered chair, which would completely hide him, he fancied, not only from persons casually passing along the passage, but from inquisitive peekers as well.

Thus secure, he fell to musing; but his thoughts for some occult reason took an altogether different trend from that pursued in his wakeful hours of the preceding night. Even the startling events of the morning and the unpleasant consequences likely to ensue had no place at this moment in his meditations. That which occupied him was the dream from which the accident had awakened him. Very vividly it recurred to him now; a practical reliving of his experience in the derailed and overturned Pullman,

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including his almost instinctive rescue of the fainting girl in the opposite seat; his journey with her in his arms to the little roadside farmhouse and his dumb adoration of her in the farmhouse kitchen.

Very plainly he saw her again—her eyes, blue pools of liquid light; her hair, spun sunbeams; her skin, a rose leaf, all white and pink. He saw her so distinctly that he could compare her now with her sister, and wonder that he had ever thought there was a marked resemblance. She was taller and more dignified, and—oh, far more beautiful!

He could hear her voice again, too—that deliciously musical voice, that had in it the murmur of purling brooks. How clearly its echoes came to him! He could almost—he *could* distinguish words. She was speaking to him; she was saying:

“I beg your pardon, but would you mind telling me, sir, whether this——”

And then he was on his feet and turning, for the voice seemed behind him. And as he turned he saw her standing in the doorway. This was no dream woman, but she in the flesh, a startled question in the blue pools of her eyes; her lips parted in sudden, bewildered, half-comprehending surprise.

CHAPTER XVIII

INQUIRY

FOR a second or more neither spoke, while a confused jumble of possible explanations raced through the brain of each. It was the girl who first recovered her speech, if not her poise.

"Why," she said, perplexity dominant in her tone, "why—it is—yes, it is—*you*, isn't it?"

Her voice lifted Brooke to a realizing sense of the situation. He gripped his reason, commanded his wits, and dropped idle, purposeless surmise for a grapple with present palpable conditions.

"It is an odd meeting, isn't it?" he ventured, with an effort at lightness. "To think that you, of all persons in the world, should be aboard this ship!"

Her long lashes swept her eyes in rapid blinking two or three times, and then she drew a white hand in clearing gesture across her upper face.

"I am—" she began, a little weakly, and took a half faltering step forward.

Brooke quickly caught up a chair and placed it for her.

"Won't you sit down?" he begged solicitously,

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"I fear you are not strong." For he noted a sudden pallor, and her movement had indicated weakness or dizziness.

A fleeting smile thanked him, as she relaxed into the proffered seat.

"I am in a daze," she went on. "Everything seems only half real. I have been dreaming, and I do not seem to be able to tell where the dream stops and reality begins."

Brooke, too, had been dreaming, and for a little while he had experienced the same uncertainty; but he did not tell her so. He was wide awake now, and very glad; for his dream had come true.

Nevertheless, the dream and the awakening had dulled his perceptions in a way. Otherwise he would have been keenly conscious of what her presence there meant.

"If I can be of service—" he began.

"You can," she broke in. "Oh, how fortunate that you are here! You seem to be my appointed deliverer. Once you saved my life, and now that my reason is threatened, you again are at hand."

The color dyed Brooke's dark skin a vivid carmine.

"I am in great trouble," the girl went on, and then paused for an instant, as if uncertain where to begin her story.

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"Tell me," the man urged.

"My father is seriously ill at Bellevue Hospital," she began, with something of an effort, "or did I dream that?"

Brooke made no attempt to answer. He sat in strained intentness, waiting for her to continue.

"That was the message they brought me. I did not even know he was in New York; but they said he had sent for me, and that a cab was waiting. It was a closed cab, and a man was in it. He told me that he was one of the doctors, and, seeing that I was nervous, he insisted that I should take some mixture he had with him. It would calm me, he said. The next I remember I was in a room on a yacht."

"On a yacht!" cried Brooke, excitedly, light breaking at last. "They brought you there from the Holland House?" How stupid he had been! Clear-headed he would have seen this at once. Rosenstein had sent a detective to look for a Miss Colby at the hotels, and finding Constance at the Holland had mistaken her for her sister. It was all very plain now, of course. And so she was the mysterious passenger.

"Yes," she answered, more perplexed now than ever. "But I didn't tell you that, did I? How did you know?"

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But Brooke was too eager to question to pause to make answer.

"Was the man in the cab a Jew?" he asked, bending forward.

"I cannot say," she told him. "I remember he wore a light cloth suit and a Panama hat, but——"

"It was Rosenstein," Brooke decided, voicing his conclusion. "They must have wrapped that veil around your face before Mumford saw you. Otherwise——"

"Mumford?" she repeated, questioningly.

"Yes," he answered. "You see it was evidently a mistake. They were attempting to kidnap your sister."

"Annette?" she cried.

"Yes. It was a most high-handed proceeding. And Jack Moore and I——"

"Jack Moore!" she exclaimed.

"You know him?"

"I met him once, several years ago. He was a friend of——"

"That's he. Well, Jack Moore and I tried to circumvent them. It's a long story, and——"

"And you were on that yacht?" she interrupted.

"It was you who got us out when——"

Brooke nodded. "Yes, it was I," he said hur-

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riedly. "But where is that woman who was with you?"

"She is still sleeping. I awoke, and finding the cabin door unlocked I came in search of the captain. I saw your reflection in the mirror yonder, and spoke."

This was but the beginning of a long series of questions and answers, continued after a little in the captain's cabin, with Captain Conway as chief interlocutor, and Jack Moore making a fourth party to the seance.

When the inquisition was over, and the captain was thoroughly well satisfied that he possessed the truth of the whole matter, he sent for the woman who had posed as a nurse.

Brooke and the others remained to listen, but, in contrast with their own frankness, the stubborn taciturnity of this creature was both repellent and prejudicial.

It was really the first time that Brooke had seen her well, but his impression, gleaned from a casual glance when she came aboard the yacht, was not altered. Her paint had worn off and her wrinkles were now clearly in evidence.

"What is your name?" Captain Conway asked.

"Alice Murphy," she answered after a pause.

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"And your occupation?"

"I'm a trained nurse."

"Trained where?" The question was put sharply, but for the better part of a minute the woman sat in silence.

"In Montreal," she said at last, her voice low.

"Who engaged you to look after this lady?"

She studied her hands for a moment, then looked at Constance Colby, and then at Brooke.

"I don't really know," she said finally.

"Don't know who it was engaged you?"

"No, sir."

"What were the circumstances of the engagement?"

"A gentleman called at my house last evening and hired me."

"Who was the gentleman?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't he give any name?"

"No."

The captain glanced about the room.

"Is he here?"

For a little interval she seemed undecided, her eyes on Moore.

"No," she answered at length.

"What did he hire you for?"

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"To nurse his wife."

"Was this lady presented as his wife?" Captain Conway indicated Miss Colby.

"She was."

"Where did you first see her?"

"In a cab."

"Where was the cab?"

"Twenty-third Street."

"Twenty-third and where?"

"East Twenty-third."

"And where?" thundered the captain.

"Lexington."

"Was she conscious or unconscious?"

"I didn't notice."

"What?"

She stared brazenly at her questioner. Then she almost shrieked:

"I didn't notice."

The captain pressed the push-button in his chart table, and a steward appeared.

"Here!" he commanded gruffly. "Look after this woman! See that she doesn't leave the ship until I give her permission."

The encounter with the reporters at Quarantine, which followed almost directly, was less annoying than had been predicted. Captain Conway gener-

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ously put a much better light upon the whole affair than Brooke and Moore had dared to hope for, due in no small measure, probably, to a chivalric effort on his part to shield Constance Colby, whose beauty and charm had not been without their effect on this veteran voyager.

Brooke would have escaped the interviewers altogether, probably, had he not ventured on deck just at the moment they were about to return to their tug. One of them, delaying to put a last question to Captain Hartley, caught sight of him as he stepped out from the companion entrance.

A tall, lean, fair-haired youth it was, with the enthusiasm of his craft written on his bright, eager young face.

"Oh, Mr. Brooke," he cried, making a dash for him, "I am delighted to see you. I hadn't the faintest notion it was this Mr. Brooke. Now I'm going to hold you to your promise."

Brooke recognized him. It was Eugene Moore, of the *Sphere*, and he remembered that he had agreed to send for him if he ever had a story that he could let him print.

"Oh, how do you do?" he said, affably enough. "I didn't recall you at first. Well! What can I do for you?"

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"You can give me the inside of this affair," the reporter returned. "So far we've only got the crust. I can see that. I kept that story out about the color of Miss Colby's eyes, and the hundred thousand dollar bet, and the overflowing bath tub; so you owe me this."

Brooke saw that he was in a very awkward position. He felt kindly towards the youth, and would like to help him; but the inwardness of this adventure must be kept from the public at all hazards.

"My dear boy," he said, his tone all persuasion, "I really can't give you a word. You were very good before, and I'd like to show my appreciation, but—well, you see, my lips are sealed. Captain Conway and Captain Hartley must have told you all there is to tell. They were appointed spokesmen, and—really, I'm not permitted to speak."

"Oh, come," urged the young newspaper man, "you can tell what the object of the trip was. Captain Hartley admitted it wasn't a pleasure cruise. What was it? Where were you going?" He halted his questioning for a second, and then he asked bluntly: "Weren't there any ladies aboard?"

There was nothing to be learned from Brooke's expression. His face was cryptically immobile.

"See here," he said, a sudden resolve taken, "I

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see how unfair it is to ask you to be considerate a second time, and I'm not going to ask it. But, just the same, I'm not going to help you any on this affair. Because, as I told you before, I can't honestly do so. But I'll tell you what I will do. You come to me to-night at the hotel and I'll give you a story that will be worth printing, and it will be all your own."

Young Moore's eyes danced.

"What time?" he asked.

"Make it midnight, in the men's café. I'll be on the lookout for you."

Then they shook hands and parted; the reporter swinging nimbly down the swaying rope ladder to the waiting tug.

When he had gone Brooke's gaze ran furtively up and down the deck. He had so much to tell her, and the time was so short. In less than an hour they would be at the dock. But she was nowhere in sight. He walked aft through the misting rain, but without reward. Then he tramped forward, with no better result. After ten minutes of search, however, he discovered her and Moore in the saloon, seated in revolving chairs beside one of the long empty dining tables.

"How long have I known you, Brooke?" It was in this wise that the Chicagoan greeted him.

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Brooke held up a hand and began counting his fingers.

"One, two—no, one and a half days," he said, laughing.

"And in all that time," returned the other, "you never told me that you were a hero, and had once saved the life of 'Peaches's' sister."

Constance Colby smiled fleetingly.

"Twice," she corrected.

"Oh, modest hero!" Moore chaffed, "and doubly a hero because so modest."

"Oh, cut it!" Brooke cried, joining in the laughter, and added in mock heroic fashion: "I did my duty, sir, and nothing more, I do assure you."

His eyes meanwhile were devouring the girl with reverent admiration. How wonderful she was! Sitting here, her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright, she gave small evidence of an experience that would have threatened ninety-nine women of a hundred with nervous prostration. She was as thoroughly composed as if pouring tea in her father's drawing-room; and yet within twelve hours she had been drugged and abducted, and her life threatened by a collision on the open sea. What splendid nerve she possessed! So far as Brooke knew, no one had told her yet of the tragedy, and he hoped that Moore had not re-

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vealed to her the story of her sister's marriage. These were matters which she could learn later. Her own adventure had been enough to compass and to overcome. He had been very guarded himself in explaining why Mumford desired to kidnap Annette. He had simply stated that he had been her riding-master, and that, avaricious of her father's wealth, he had planned the abduction in hope of a ransom.

When Moore went away and left them alone together, Constance Colby reverted to this.

"Tell me, Mr. Brooke," she said, perplexed, "how you came to know about my sister. I can't seem to understand it."

"I met her the first day I was in New York," he told her.

"And you knew that she was my sister?"

"Not then; no," he answered. "How could I? I did not even know your name then. I should not have known at all had it not been that I saw your photograph in her rooms. It was a very strange coincidence, wasn't it?"

"Marvelous," she commented; and then she asked: "But where did you see her? I came to New York especially to find her, but could get no trace of her. She was to visit friends of ours on Long Island, but

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she did not go there. To tell you the truth, Mr. Brooke, Annette is rather a little dare-devil, you know. Not wicked. Oh, no. And the sweetest, dearest child in the world. But most unconventional, and apt to do wild, harum-scarum things. I knew that for some time she had carried on a clandestine correspondence with someone here in New York, and, to tell the truth, I feared she would elope with someone not worthy of her. Consequently, as soon as she left Chicago I started to follow her. You know how the trip was interrupted." She paused, and an expression of sadness came into her eyes. "Poor Clemence!" she added. "I felt that I must go back with her body. She had a brother in Chicago, who was heartbroken over her death."

"Your sister is at the Saint Regis," conveyed Brooke. "She'll be surprised to see you, I dare say."

For just a little the girl gazed thoughtfully into vacancy.

"I do hope," she said, at length, "that she hasn't done anything foolish. Tell me, Mr. Brooke, have you heard anything?"

For just a brief moment he was undecided how to answer. She had put the question to him directly, and he did not want to tell her an untruth.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he evaded,

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"your sister is fonder of Jack Moore than anyone else."

Constance Colby clapped her hands in pleased animation.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried delightedly. "I was afraid—awfully afraid—that it was someone else, and that I might be too late."

When, however, her next question came, evasion was less easy.

"And now," she said persuasively, "you must tell me what will happen to this Mumford and his accomplice, the Jew. Mr. Moore wouldn't give me any satisfaction concerning them."

Brooke looked away from her, directing his gaze towards one of the open port-holes.

"They are under lock and key, aren't they?" she persisted.

"They were," Brooke answered, truthfully enough.

"And—oh, I shan't have to appear against them, shall I?"

"I hardly think so," he told her.

"I'm glad of that. Still, they should be punished, of course. I suppose someone will make a complaint. Is Mr. Moore going to, or you?"

"We haven't settled that point," Brooke prevaricated.

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"If my father were in New York he would see that they received what they deserved."

"He'll be there to-day, I think."

"He will?"

"Yes. Your sister said as much."

In this commonplace fashion their conversation meandered. There was little in it significant of the character of either, yet each felt that they knew the other better when it was finished. The awe which had been part of Brooke's admiration in the little Indiana farmhouse no longer entered into his intercourse with the girl. He felt that he had known her a long while, and that he understood her, and that she understood him. Her beauty magnified in his sight—and it was a beauty of character as well as of person.

CHAPTER XIX

SUSPENSE

WALTER PADDOCK accepted the loss of his yacht with a cheerfulness that was characteristic of him. He was one of the several hundred persons that crowded the pier when the *Franklin* was warped in—for the first editions of the evening papers had printed the news of the disaster—and he greeted Brooke and Moore gaily as they came ashore.

“You’re a jolly bunch of sailors!” he exclaimed, merrily. “I’m glad I wasn’t aboard myself, though. Not but that I would have relished the rescue, but I’m afraid the insurance people might have suspected intent. You know I wanted to get rid of the tub. Now she’s at the bottom of the sea, and they’ll pay me every dollar she was worth. Too bad, though, there was loss of life! There’s Ikey Stern over there now. He’s frantic over Rosenstein’s death. He seems to have loved him as a son, though I don’t think the public will waste much time in regret. Between us, you know, he was rather a blackguard. By the way, we had to postpone the balloon trip again. Air currents dead wrong.”

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The newspapers gave little information regarding Mumford. They had got his residence on One-hundred-and-third Street from the directory, and found that he lived there with his brother and sister-in-law, but the janitor stated that the flat had been closed for a day or two, and the Mumfords had left no word as to when they would return. The deceased was known as a riding-master, and his brother as a racing tout. To the delight of Brooke and Moore there was no intimation that the yachting trip was other than a mere pleasure excursion, and the presence on board of Miss Colby and another woman, owing to the discretion of Captain Conway, was not even hinted at.

Brooke and Moore separated at the pier, agreeing to meet again at the hotel at six o'clock for dinner. And while Moore went off with Paddock and Captain Conway, Brooke got into a hansom with Constance Colby, and was driven to the St. Regis, where the re-united sisters laughed and wept a little in each others' arms, marveled over the smallness of the world, and discussed with interest Brooke's theory of personal orbits.

It was an occasion for confidences, and Annette naïvely told her sister of her marriage, her experience in the Park and Brooke's opportune arrival.

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And then Brooke revealed to them both the tragedy of the *Amaryllis's* forward staterooms.

"Poor Jim!" Annette murmured, when he had finished.

"Poor Jim?" repeated her sister, indignantly. "Surely, dear, you can't feel sorry for such a creature!"

But without replying, Annette walked to a window and stood for a little while looking out on the avenue.

"I suppose," she said at length, "I ought to be glad, because I am free; but he was not altogether bad. When he was sober, he was really most fascinating."

The day had turned lazily warm after the fog and the rain, and at Annette's suggestion the trio drove to Claremont for luncheon, where they chose a table on the veranda overlooking the Hudson.

Brooke reveled in the charm of it. To have been privileged to sit and look at Constance Colby would have seemed to him a boon, but this intimate association was inexpressibly delightful. Again his duty regarding the money he had found was ignored, if not forgotten. Later he might repent his dissipation of the day, but for the moment he experienced no qualms.

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When the afternoon was well spent and they still sat over the luncheon table, entertaining and entertained in an exchange of anecdotes and reminiscences, he heard with regret the younger girl's suggestion that they should return to the hotel.

"Papa wired me, you know," she explained, "that he would be there at five-thirty, and I shouldn't like him to find me away."

They wanted Brooke to meet their father, but he asked to be excused until another time. His engagement with Moore, he recalled, was for six, and this would allow him scant opportunity for presentation to Mr. Colby.

But when he reached the Waldorf-Astoria, Moore was not there. He had been in, a clerk explained, and had gone out again, hurriedly; but had left a note.

Brooke, standing at the desk, with the ever-present crowd which fills the hotel office jostling about him, tore open the envelope and read:

"Dear Old Chap: I found the enclosed in my box when I came in just now—2:40—and though I know it is meant for you, I'm going to respond myself, seeing that you'll probably come in too late to keep the engagement. But I'll be back by six. You can depend on that.

"J. M."

SUSPENSE

Then with growing excitement, Brooke's eyes ran hastily over this ill-written enclosure :

"I gest it wasent safe fur to keep the apointment las nite, but Ime willin to do the square be you, if yure willin to pay. A fren of mine wot nose all you wan to no wil hav the nex sete to this at the mat this afernun. Slip the partie 50 dolas, and yu kin depen on wot yure tol. *Ticket incloas.*

"S. H."

Brooke's eyes lifted to the wall clock on the opposite side of the office. The time still lacked four minutes of six. Then, impatiently thrusting the two notes into his coat pocket, he began a nervous circuit of the ground floor rooms of the great hotel. Café, bar, grill room, writing room, Turkish room, reception room and corridors, he traversed one after the other, stopping at the doors of the restaurants and palm rooms *en route* to glance in cursory search.

Then he wondered which way Moore would come. If his friend had only thought of giving him the name of the theatre, he could have formed some guess; but Moore had neglected to do this, probably because of haste.

A second time he made the circuit, and now the hands of the clock pointed to ten minutes after six, and still the man he looked for had not come.

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He sat down in a great leather-cushioned arm-chair with gilded back, which gave him a view of the eddying currents of humanity which surged through the office, and commanded the desk where Moore must stop for his room key. A premonition that something was wrong pressed weightily upon him. In vain he argued with himself against such a probability. It was idle to imagine that at a theatre in the metropolis of the United States, in broad daylight, anything in the nature of violence could happen to a man. Yet the *matinée* must now have been over for nearly, if not quite, an hour, and Moore had not returned.

Very slowly the minutes ticked by, and Brooke's restlessness would not permit him to sit still. He made his way to the Thirty-third Street entrance, and stood watching the streams of coming and going visitors. He went out onto the sidewalk and gazed anxiously east and west. Then he fancied that he whom he expected might have come in from Thirty-fourth Street, so he retraced his steps, and again inquired at the desk. But Mr. Moore had not returned.

At quarter of seven, looking into the bar for the tenth or twelfth time, he was hailed by Paddock.

"Hello, there!" he cried, cordially. "Come have a drink!"

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But Brooke declined.

"Excuse me," he said, his anxiety evident in his voice in spite of himself. "I'm looking for Moore."

Paddock laughed, rather boisterously.

"Moore," he repeated, in derision. "Well, you're looking in the wrong place, that's your trouble. I saw Jack, not over half an hour ago, spinning up Broadway in a hired motor car, accompanied by a yellow-haired fairy in black."

"What!" exclaimed Brooke, aghast.

"Sure thing," returned Paddock. "So you might as well have a drink and look pleasant."

"But he was to meet me here at six," Brooke protested.

"He evidently met somebody he liked better," the young millionaire declared. "Come, a cocktail will cheer you up!"

Thus urged, Brooke consented; but as he stood with his elbows on the bar, his eyes fixed, unseeing, on the array of glasses ranged on the shelves at the back, he was deaf to Paddock's continued chatter. His brain was busy trying to reconcile this matinée visit, of which he knew, with what his acquaintance had just told him. But it was a difficult task, and finally he resolved to abandon it and wait.

In a way, Paddock's story had brought him relief,

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for the picture presented to his mind by it was certainly not a fearsome one, and he breathed easier to think that Moore was not in danger.

Paddock invited him to dine with him, and he accepted, glad thus to kill time with diversion; but just as they were about to sit down a page called Brooke to the telephone, and he rushed off, all excitement once more, believing that Moore had found opportunity to communicate with him.

But it was not Moore, after all. It was Constance Colby. Her father had arrived and he wanted Brooke and Moore to dine with them at Delmonico's.

"I'd like to awfully," the young man answered; "it's really very good of your father, and I appreciate it; but Mr. Moore hasn't come in yet, and—well, you see, I don't just know when he will get here."

"Can't you come, then?" the girl urged. "You can leave word for him to follow."

But Brooke begged her to excuse him. Certain matters had turned up, he explained, which made it imperative that he wait there for Moore, who might telephone.

"I'm very sorry," he added, regretfully. "It's most unfortunate."

"It's cruel," Miss Colby returned. "And I'm terribly disappointed."

SUSPENSE

When Brooke left the booth he was smiling. Those final words of Constance Colby had made him almost happy again.

But his dinner with Paddock was a dull affair. Suspense and expectancy sat at table between them, and engaged all of Brooke's mental processes, so that when the meal was over he apologized to his host for his absorption.

Paddock laughed at him.

"You're worse than a mother with her first born," he said, jocosely. "Fancy your being upset over Jack Moore forgetting an engagement!" And then, he added: "Better come over to Philadelphia to-night. I'm going sky-sailing, no matter how the wind is."

When they had separated Brooke felt that he required something to distract him. To sit waiting hour after hour, inactive, and with not even a theory to work upon, was nerve-racking.

He had never really counted the money in the bag he had found—only roughly estimated it—and he determined now to make a more careful, and, if possible, an accurate count. Thus resolved, he secured the bag from the office safe, and, gripping it firmly, carried it to his room.

There, behind his locked door, he plunged ener-

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getically into the task, which proved a tedious one. There were bills of all denominations, mingled and mixed indiscriminately, without order or system or reason; and he soon discovered that his estimate was far from a correct one. Bundles that he had counted as fives contained twenties and hundreds. Some that he had thought were made up of fifties proved to be, for the most part, ones and twos.

He was engrossed in his work, and time traveled with somewhat accelerated pace. Midnight came and went before he realized the march of the hours. And still no word or sign from Moore.

It was now a quarter of two, and he was counting with tired fingers and weary brain the last handful of the seemingly never-ending bills. Abruptly the whirr of the telephone bell sounding behind him caused him to start in nervous tremor. But instantly he commanded himself, and overturning his chair in his haste he fairly sprang for the instrument. For some unknown reason there was delay in getting the "party" that wanted him. They had been cut off, and had to be recovered; and Brooke sat meanwhile, pale with suspense, the perspiration beading in cold drops on his brow.

Then he heard:

"There's your party! Go ahead!"

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"Hello!" he called.

"Is this Mr. Moore?" It sounded like Moore's voice, but he could not be sure. Besides, why should Moore call him Moore? But he did not hesitate.

"Yes," he answered. "I'm Mr. Moore."

"You're the Waldorf clerk, aren't you?"

"I'm—" he began; but whoever was speaking waited for no answer.

"All right, Mr. Moore," he was going on, "I want you to send me that bag I left in your care yesterday. Yes, I know I told you to give it to no one but myself, but I must have it now, at once, and will have to send a messenger for it. Be sure to send it. It's important. Very important. The messenger will receipt for it."

Brooke, perplexed beyond measure, was about to reply, when he heard a click and a sudden cessation of the low throbbing pulse of the induction.

"Hello!" he called; but there was no answer.

Yes, it had been Moore's voice. He was sure of it now. There were certain intonations that were unmistakable. But what did he mean by calling him a clerk and demanding the bag of money? The whole thing was bewildering, unless—yes, that was the explanation. He was acting under compulsion. He had talked, while every word he spoke was listened

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to. They had made him call up the clerk at the hotel, and he had shrewdly called up Moore—by which name Brooke was still known there—in order to give him a hint as to what was going on. And yet it was all very vague. This seemed, though, the only reasonable solution.

And now, in a little while, the messenger would appear at the office desk down stairs, and he must be there and have the bag ready. For he would send the bag and follow himself. In that way only could he learn where Moore was being held.

At once he began tossing the bills into his trunk, putting the uncounted handful on one side, and stopping in the midst of his work to scribble down the amount he had counted—\$122,463. He locked the trunk and strapped it, after he had transferred all the money to its bottom, beneath his clothes; and then began looking about for something with which to stuff the bag to a seemly bulkiness. But the room was disappointingly bare of waste paper or other waste material, and the necessity for immediate action permitted no time for sending out for what he wanted. In the bathroom, however, were towels in abundance, and he filled the bag with these, only to discover that he had achieved bulk at the expense of weight.

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The telephone book offered itself as a partial remedy at least, and he included it. His next move was to carefully cord the bag as it had been corded before, with many wrappings and a superfluity of knots.

The night clerk smiled in surprise when he appeared at the desk.

"Not going to leave us at this hour, Mr. Moore?" he asked.

Brooke told him of the message he had received, and of his perplexity and alarm in consequence.

"There's something wrong," he added, with conviction, "and I mean to get to the bottom of it."

"Better take the house detective with you," the clerk suggested. "You're not likely to accomplish much single-handed."

"Can he be spared?" Brooke asked.

"Oh, yes; for an hour or so. I'll call him."

The detective and the messenger arrived at about the same moment. The night clerk, who had been given the bag for the purpose, brought it out from under the counter and handed it to the uniformed boy, receiving a slip of paper in return, and the lad, gathering up his burden, started leisurely out through the one open door leading to Thirty-fourth Street.

Brooke snatched the bit of paper from the clerk's hand and stopped to glance at it. It was simply a

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nervous pencil scrawl in a hand he did not recognize.

Already the detective had followed the boy to the sidewalk, and there, almost immediately, Brooke joined him.

"There he goes," the officer announced, pointing eastward. "I guess he's making for the Subway. We'll take the other side of the street."

And the two men crossed over.

CHAPTER XX

TRAILED

AT the corner of Fifth Avenue the messenger boy was joined by a man who suddenly emerged from the shadow of the hotel; and the two, instead of proceeding eastward towards the subway station, as the detective had prophesied, turned southward on the avenue.

Seeing this, Brooke and his companion hastily recrossed Thirty-fourth Street, cutting diagonally to the east side of the thoroughfare of fashion, in order to avoid conveying to the man and boy that they were being followed. But even as they did so, they saw that a big touring car was drawn up at the curb near the Thirty-third Street corner, and that it was for that the pursued were making.

"We haven't a chance," Brooke muttered, as he glanced searchingly up and down the deserted avenue in vain quest of a vehicle in which to follow.

"Not to follow that thing," the detective agreed, as the man threw the bag into the tonneau and sprang into the chauffeur's seat.

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Another instant and the big car was passing them, gathering speed as it fled northward.

"The boy was a blind," the detective commented; "he didn't go along. See, here he comes now."

The lad, whistling as he came, was crossing the avenue on a dog trot.

Brooke stopped him.

"Are you the boy that got a bag at the Waldorf just now?" he asked. He was sure that he could not be mistaken, but he adopted the question as a means of introduction.

The messenger halted.

"Sure!" he answered.

"Did you come with the man in the automobile?"

Again the boy answered: "Sure."

"Where did you come from?" Brooke accompanied the question with a silver half-dollar.

The lad, from force of habit, tried the coin with his teeth.

"Where from?" he questioned, repeating the inquiry.

"Yes. There's been a mistake. You got the wrong bag. We want to——"

"Youse wants to know where de bloke's takin' it, eh?"

"Yes. That's it." A little nervously.

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The lad grinned broadly in the glare of the electric. His deliberation was exasperating.

"Youse kin search me," he added, nonchalantly. "I'm from de office at T'irty-sixt' Street. He got me as he come by."

Brooke's disappointment and disgust found expression in an expletive, and the boy went whistling up the avenue.

"See here, Mr. Moore," the detective put in—all the hotel staff still knew Brooke as Moore—"you'll have to show me a little bit. I don't exactly understand. How did you get the tip that they were sending for that bag?"

Phillips, the detective, had been called into the matter so suddenly, and so abruptly started to work, that his idea of the situation was necessarily hazy. His companion gave him a brief and hurried explanation.

"You don't know, of course, where the telephone call came from?"

"Certainly not. If I did——"

"I see. How long ago did you get it?"

"Not over fifteen or twenty minutes ago."

"And they asked for Mr. Moore?"

"Yes."

"I'll find out where the call came from."

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"But the operator won't——"

"Oh, yes, the operator will, *for me.*"

They were walking back towards the hotel as they talked.

"Now," said Phillips, when they were inside, "you call up the electric cab company and order a hansom, and I'll find out where we're going. We'll be ten minutes late, perhaps, but not more, and if we have luck we'll find out what's doing before anything serious has happened."

The next instant Phillips, after a word to the sleepy night operator, had dodged into a telephone booth and Brooke was asking for the electric cab company's number. The two men emerged at almost the same moment.

"I've got it," the detective exclaimed. "It was the Albright Apartments on West Ninety-seventh Street. Did you tell them to hurry that hansom?"

Brooke nodded.

"It didn't take *you* long," he commented.

"I know the night manager," Phillips explained, a little loftily. "Come, we'll catch the cab at the Broadway corner. It'll save a minute, maybe."

But the wait of five minutes at the Broadway corner seemed endless. Both men were nervously

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anxious for the pursuit, and seconds dragged along as minutes.

When at length they were off the hansom made good time. Broadway was practically deserted, and the driver, at the detective's behest, put on full speed.

As they neared the corner of Ninety-fifth Street Brooke glimpsed a big touring car, laboring along slowly, just ahead.

"By George!" he exclaimed excitedly. "That looks like the fellow's car."

"Whoever he is," returned Phillips, "he's in trouble. He's had an accident of some sort. He's limping."

As he spoke the hansom whirled by the creeping car. It had but one occupant.

"Ten to one it's he," decided Brooke. "Will he imagine we're after him?"

"Hardly. An electric hansom on upper Broadway at this hour isn't unusual. But we'll run up to Ninety-eighth Street just the same, to throw him off, and come around by Riverside Drive. Then we'll drop this vehicle at the corner and go afoot."

The detective conveyed his instructions to the chauffeur through the hole in the cab's roof, and the hansom made the détour as directed.

"We'll wait until we see him go in," Phillips sug-

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gested, as they stood at the corner in full view of the house. "That is, if it really is he; and then we'll follow."

Another moment and the hoarse wheezing of the maimed motor reached their ears. It was descending the slope from West End Avenue. A second more, and they saw it come to a stop before the entrance to the apartment house.

Then the watchers walked hastily in that direction, while the car's occupant sprang from his seat, reached into the tonneau, brought forth the bag, and turned in through the wide and rather imposing entrance of the big building. As he did so, they were at his heels.

Phillips would have followed at once, but Brooke caught him by the arm.

"Wait," he said in a whisper. "Let the elevator take him up first. It isn't the bag we want, it's to get into the apartment, and we don't want to force our way in unless it's necessary. Let me manage it!"

The detective, who was a trifle shorter than Brooke, but burly, with a red face, shrewd grey eyes and a short-cropped dark mustache, shrugged his stalwart shoulders.

"You're the captain," he said laconically.

The broad hallway was dim with a single light

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burning at one end. By this, however, they saw the man awaken the dozing colored elevator boy and saw the pair enter the elevator. Then they heard the harsh metallic rattle of the elevator door, and saw the 'cage rise slowly and disappear.

When it descended they were standing before it, waiting.

"The man you just took up got the wrong bag from the Waldorf, by mistake," Brooke announced succinctly, before the iron grating had been swung back. "We want to go up and explain."

Leisurely the negro boy opened the door.

"Can't take you up," he announced, with equal succinctness.

"But we must go up," Phillips interjected, "it's very important."

"Can't take you up," repeated the boy, as he got out of the car and closed the grating after him.

"Why not?"

"Ordahs is to take nobody up to Mistah Stoughton's, sah!"

"But—" Phillips pulled back his coat and showed a silver badge adorning his left suspender. "Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"No, sah; an' I don't care. I'se only car'ing out ordahs, sah."

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Then Brooke resumed :

" Let me speak to Mr. Stoughton over the 'phone."

" No, sah ! Mr. Stoughton can't be disturbed, sah."

The detective caught the boy by the shoulder and wheeled him about, facing him. The light glinted on the barrel of a revolver held within six inches of the negro's nose.

" No more nonsense now ! " he commanded sternly. " Open that door and take us up to Mr. Stoughton's floor."

The youth's jaw had dropped, and for a moment he stood trembling, palsied by fear.

" Hustle ! " Phillips's voice rang out sharply in the silence of the deserted entrance hall, and the boy started with a shiver.

" Fo' Gawd's sake—" he began ; but the detective pointed to the elevator.

" No talk now. Open that door ! " He had lowered the revolver, and the boy, recovered in a measure from his panic, obeyed without further demur.

" Now," the detective went on, " you'll stop at Stoughton's floor, and you'll ring his bell, and you'll get us inside his flat."

Docile enough now, the boy made efforts to obey. But his push on the bell button brought no response.

" Ring again ! "

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Once more he pressed, but the result was the same.

Brooke turned his back to the door, and kicked vigorously and resoundingly. Only silence followed. Then he kicked again, and from within could be heard voices in disputation.

"Shout that it's you, and you want to see Mr. Stoughton," Phillips directed, addressing the negro. Again his revolver was in view, and again the lad lost his voice. The detective shook him roughly.

"Shout, I say! Don't you hear me?"

The negro rallied his courage. "It's me, Mistah Stoughton, 'Zekiel!" he called; but his voice was not strong.

"Louder!" Phillips urged.

"It's 'Zekiel," he repeated. "I'se got a message fo' you."

The sound of footsteps followed; there was a hand on the doorknob; and then—the door opened suddenly, and would have been as suddenly closed but the detective had a foot and knee between it and the jamb.

"Just one minute, sir," he pleaded, as it came in sharp contact with his leg. "We're sorry to disturb you, but——"

In the momentary opening Brooke had caught only the merest glimpse of the opener. Now, however, the

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door was spread wide, and a tall, imposing, gentlemanly-appearing man in evening dress stood in the passageway. His hair and mustache were snow white; though otherwise he did not appear elderly.

"Well?" he demanded, with a dignity that was nothing short of superb. "Perhaps you gentlemen will explain why I am disturbed in this manner at this hour?"

Brooke was nearly speechless with surprise. All at once it was borne in upon him that some egregious mistake must have been made. From the moment that he saw the Albright apartments he had been puzzled. They were scarcely the sort of place in which Jack Moore, or any one else, would be likely to be held prisoner. And now that the supposed jailer stood before him, the whole appearance and manner of the man were in themselves almost a refutation. Could it be possible, Brooke asked himself, that Phillips had been given the wrong address? But the man in the automobile? Certainly he had taken a bag from the tonneau, and he appeared like the man who had placed the bag in the tonneau of the car down the avenue. And yet it might not be the same.

The possibility of having blundered unnerved Brooke for the moment, and he stood a statue of perplexed silence.

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"We'll explain, all right," the detective was saying rather brusquely. "You 'phoned to the Waldorf for a grip and then sent a man down after it. Well, the man got the——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the tall figure in the doorway, "but you are in error. I did not 'phone to the Waldorf, and I did not send any man. Now, if you'll kindly excuse me——"

Even Phillips was taken aback by the man's assurance.

"Didn't a man just enter your flat with a grip?" he asked, a little dubiously.

"And if so?"

"Well, that was the man," the detective insisted. "He got that grip from this gentleman here," indicating Brooke, "who is a clerk at the hotel, and who gave him the——"

The gentlemanly man in evening dress smiled.

"You doubtless mean well," he said, in a tone of conviction, "but you are acting under a misapprehension. The man with what you call a grip did not bring it from the Waldorf. He arrived just now from out of town. I had been waiting up for him."

Brooke, his speech recovered, now stepped forward.

"We don't want to be rude, sir," he said, conciliat-

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ingly, "but it seems hardly possible that we can be wrong. We saw that very car in front of the hotel, and we saw the bag, which a messenger boy called for, thrown into it. Now it's very important that we find that bag again. You see, it was the wrong bag and——"

The expression of the man addressed altered instantly.

"The wrong bag?" he queried.

"That is what we have been trying to tell you," Phillips returned, a little haughtily. "But you——"

"It is just possible that my friend stopped at the Waldorf on his way up," he cut in, with a complete change of front, "and if he made a mistake he'll be your debtor for correcting it. Pardon me one moment, please."

He would have closed the door, but the detective's foot again prevented. As he retreated down the passage, Phillips, allowing the door to swing inward, tried to peer after him, but the passage was in darkness. After a little moment, however, the detective saw the darkness cut by a sudden glare from a lighted room, as an inside door was opened, and through this he saw the tall man pass. Then the passage was dark again.

The colored boy, Ezekiel, had stood meanwhile

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gazing in silent, open-mouthed, awed wonder. Now Brooke turned to him.

"'Zekiel," he said, "you saw that bag, didn't you?"

"Yassah!"

"Was there anything about it that would make you remember it?"

"Yassah!"

"What?"

"Der was ropes round it, sah!"

Brooke looked at Phillips and grinned. No longer was there any doubt in his mind.

"Was that Mr. Stoughton?" he asked Ezekiel.

"Yassah!"

"What's Mr. Stoughton's business, 'Zekiel? Do you know?"

"He's sellin' some kind o' gold stocks or sumfin' like dat, sah."

This time the detective winked at Brooke.

"Gold bricks, I guess," he said.

"Yessah," affirmed the negro. "Yessah! Dat's it for shu! Gold bricks, sah!"

Again a light flashed midway down the passage.

Then, instantly, the whole passage was illuminated—a group of electric lights having been switched on—and in this sudden glare Brooke saw that which

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transfixed him with astonishment. Stoughton, who was approaching, was not alone. Behind him sauntered Jack Moore, talking and smiling, as though his presence there at that hour was quite the most natural thing in the world.

CHAPTER XXI

RETROSPECTIVE

“WELL, old chap, what do you make of it?”

It was two hours later, and Brooke and Moore sat together in Brooke's room at the Waldorf, while the blue dawn came in through the east windows and turned to sickly yellow the glow of the electrics over their heads.

Moore had told his story—a strange tale of the unexpected—and Brooke had tried with its aid to draw some conclusion from the events at the Albright, in which they had both had a part; but it had all proved very baffling; and now, as he sat stretched out in a great arm-chair, his feet on a hassock and a cigar between his teeth, he admitted as much, in reply to his friend's question.

“It's too much of a mystery for me as it stands,” he said, with a hopeless minor key in his voice. “I can't make head, tail nor middle of it.”

For a moment there was silence, while Moore looked at his watch, got to his feet and walked restlessly to one of the windows.

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"Suppose we go over it again," Brooke suggested, inspired by a renewed determination to grapple with the problem to a finish. "I'll just run through the facts, as I understand them; and if I misstate any one of them I'll expect you to correct me."

Moore turned from the window and half seated himself on the arm of a chair.

"Drive ahead," he said, with an air of resignation. "It's quite beyond my powers of deduction. I'll admit that. I never encountered such an amazing mix-up in all my experience. It's worse than any Arabian Nights story."

But Brooke scarcely heard him. His brow was drawn, his lips were pursed and his eyes thoughtful.

"In the first place," he began, "in response to the note signed S. H., which enclosed a matinée ticket, you went to the Herald Square Theatre. You found the ticket called for an end seat, so there was no difficulty in discovering on which side was located the party to whom you were directed to slip a fifty dollar bill. You were, however, completely nonplussed when you found that your neighbor was a young woman of lady-like appearance, who through two acts of the play gave you no sign of encouragement and refused to respond to any respectful advance on your part. Under the circumstances, of course, you could

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not have offered the fifty dollars, which, I believe, it was really never your intention to include in the programme."

"Right you are," Moore agreed, laughing. "I didn't intend to give up a fifty until—well, at least, until I could see a fair chance of some return."

"As the play was nearing its conclusion, I understand you to say, the lady appeared to be on the verge of fainting. She told you she was suddenly ill, and asked you if you would kindly see her to her motor, which was waiting outside."

"Yes, and she was very circumspect about it. Nothing forward or bold. She really appeared done up."

"When you got her to the motor, she asked—What was it she asked?"

"She seemed to recover as soon as she got into the air," Moore explained, "and as she stepped into the tonneau she said, very quietly, scarcely even addressing me, but loud enough for me to hear: 'You're Mr. Moore, and you want some information. I'll take you where you can get it.' That was enough for me, of course, so I followed her into the car, and the next minute we were flying uptown."

"And she took you directly to the Albright, didn't you say?"

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"Yes, as straight as trucks, cabs and a few other impeding vehicles would permit."

"What was said on the way? What did you talk about?" Brooke asked.

"I told her I feared I hadn't carried out my part of the arrangement altogether. That I was to have passed her fifty dollars as a sort of countersign. She laughed at that, and said it was a compliment to her that I hadn't. She would have been embarrassed if I had, and so on. It seems that was an idea of the fly gentleman who wrote the note. He thought that unless there was some *quid pro quo* we would suspect ulterior motives. At least that was how she explained it. I asked her if she thought any sensible man would give away fifty dollars to a stranger on the mere hope of learning how a hundred thousand dollars could be made quickly and without risk. She said something about suckers being born every minute. No, she didn't use that phrase, but that is what she meant."

Brooke's cigar had gone out, and as he struck a match to relight it he asked:

"When you reached the Albright she took you up to Stoughton's rooms, you say?"

"Straight up."

"And there being no one there, she asked you to wait?"

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"Yes. She explained then that she was stenographer to a Mr. Stoughton, who was interested in marketing Nevada mining stocks; that Stoughton would be home at any minute, and that what I wanted to know he would be glad to tell me."

"Couldn't you have 'phoned me while you waited?" Brooke asked a little reproachfully.

"I wanted to, but she told me the 'phone was out of order; and I didn't dare to go downstairs, because—well, I thought I'd get away in a little while, anyhow, and that a half hour wouldn't make any especial difference."

"Now, as I remember your story," Brooke proceeded, "it was after seven o'clock when Stoughton arrived, and then he declined to talk business until after dinner?"

"That's right. He said dinner was waiting, and that I must be his guest. The young woman in the meantime was dismissed, but when we sat down to dinner there was the other man—Foley—the fellow who afterwards came down here for the bag."

"And Stoughton was very entertaining?"

"One of the most thoroughly entertaining men I ever met. There isn't a country in the world he hasn't visited, and there isn't a man of prominence in the United States, from Teddy Roosevelt to Tom

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Lawson, that he doesn't know. I'll confess he quite carried me off my feet. I forgot all about time, and all about why I was there. We chattered on as if he and I were old friends, and when the dinner was finished we still sat over liqueurs and cigars, and not a word yet about the whole strange proceeding."

"But Foley?" interjected Brooke. "What did he say?"

"Not very much. He just listened."

"Now tell me again—won't you—just how finally you got to the subject of the bag, and just what was said, as nearly as you can remember."

Moore rose from his position on the chair arm and took a place in front of the bureau, with his legs spread apart.

"That's a pretty big order," he said, smiling. "But I'll have a try at it."

From the street below came up the rumble of the momentarily increasing early morning traffic. With every second, too, the daylight grew.

"To tell the truth," Moore continued, "Stoughton worked around to it very cleverly. He had been proving to us that the world is prone to take men at their own valuation; and then he propounded the theory that the law of supply and demand is really a very much overrated affair. 'It may have regu-

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lated prices at one period of the world's history,' he went on, 'but it isn't one-two-three in these days. The world will take commodities at your own valuation just as it will take men,' he said. Then he told us how, a few months ago, he had entered into a wager with certain prominent business men to prove this. He had proposed to show them that he could give a thoroughly worthless mining stock a fixed market value far in advance of some of the most worthy stocks on the list. It had taken him some time to accomplish it, but he had certainly succeeded, and everything was going beautifully, when—what do you suppose happened?"

"You told me what happened," Brooke replied. "His right-hand man couldn't stand the temptation that was presented and skipped with the proceeds."

"Exactly. Skipped with one hundred and twenty-four thousand dollars, all in bills, and all in a pigskin traveling bag," Moore announced.

"I know that part of the story," Brooke put in, with a shade of irritation, "and how he thought you were the one who had got the bag by some hook or crook, he didn't much care how; and how he wanted to compromise with you, letting you keep half, but insisting that you turn over the other half to him. But still I don't understand about this 'Shorty'

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Hanks business. How did he find out from 'Shorty' Hanks that there was such a bag in the possession of a man named John Moore, who was stopping at the Waldorf?"

"He claims he doesn't know 'Shorty,'" Moore explained. "He said that 'Shorty' knew someone who knew him, and that 'Shorty' had told this person that a man named John Moore at the Waldorf had a bagful of money and that he would be an easy mark for anybody with a good get-rich-quick scheme."

"Still I don't see," insisted Brooke. "Our friend Stoughton is trying to make it appear that his game is perfectly straight, yet he evidently deals with crooks. But with all your telling, old man, you haven't yet told me how you finally managed to telephone me as you did."

Moore laughed amusedly.

"I had been aching to get you up there," he said. "I wanted you to see Stoughton for yourself, and yet I didn't dare say at that stage of the proceedings that I wasn't the possessor of the bag. He would have thought I had got it dishonestly and was trying to shift the blame. So when he had insisted for the hundredth time that I let Mr. Foley run down after it, and that I relieve myself of all further responsibility concerning it, by making the division then

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and there in his rooms, I told him that Moore, the night clerk, would deliver the bag to no one, except myself; but that if he recognized my voice over the 'phone he might consent to give it to my messenger. 'But,' I added, 'your 'phone unfortunately is out of order.' 'Out of order!' he repeated. 'I don't think so. Excuse me, while I investigate.' It wasn't out of order, of course, and I got you, and you followed, just as I expected you would."

"I wonder how you expected me to follow a motor car," Brooke commented.

"Motor car!"

"Yes. Didn't you know Foley came after it in a car?"

"Lord! No. I never thought of that. I fancied he'd run down by the Subway. How did you manage it, then?"

Brooke told him; and then he added:

"Stoughton's a queer fish. He doesn't tell a word more than is necessary to his purpose, does he?"

"Not a syllable."

"Do you think this money really belongs to him?" Brooke asked after a moment's pause. "If I could be sure of it I'd give it up gladly."

Moore shook his head.

"I shouldn't give it up until he had proved his

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claim," he replied. "So far he has only proved that the bag was once in his possession."

Brooke sprang up now, and took a turn or two up and down the room.

"Gad!" he exclaimed, "he did that cleverly, didn't he? And I thought I had examined that bag thoroughly inside and out. Do you remember how willing I was for him to examine it? 'Mr. Moore,' he said, 'there is a pocket in that bag that was mended in my office with a piece of blank parchment paper. If you will permit me, I will show it to you. And I will also show you that there is no mere coincidence about this, for I'll write down now for you the name that appears in the water mark of the paper.' And, by Jove! There it was, just as he had written it: 'Old Hampshire Bond'!"

"Did you notice his face when the bag was opened?" Moore asked, smiling. "It was a picture. I nearly exploded with mirth when I saw those Waldorf towels and the telephone book. It was all I could do to appear amazed and indignant. I'm afraid I'm not much of an actor. But Stoughton's face came near to being my last straw. He fully expected to see the bills bubbling over, and when he looked in and saw Turkish toweling it was an awful jar."

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"He may be all to the bad," Brooke commented, "but I'll give him credit for the way he carried himself then. Of course he was surprised, and disappointed, but he didn't lose his poise for an instant. And as for you not being an actor, why you're a star. Your dismay over discovering the money gone was about as real a piece of work as I ever saw; and the way you turned on me, the poor office clerk, and demanded to know how such a substitution could have taken place, was nothing short of superb."

"You don't think, then, that he thought we were in collusion?"

"He certainly didn't give any sign of it."

"You're not such a bad actor yourself," Moore declared, appreciatively. "You got out of the 'wrong bag' story very well. That was a clever ruse to begin with, and then your explanation that you feared, after delivering the bag and looking at the scrawled receipt, that you had given up my property to someone who wasn't authorized to receive it, was capital. It made the presence of the detective all right, too."

"And then Stoughton did some good work, too," Brooke went on. "I liked his seemingly candid confession that he feared we were thieves who knew the value of the bag and were trying to secure it by

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a subterfuge. It explained and excused his lies so beautifully."

Then they reverted again to Stoughton's recollection of how the bag was mended, and the kind of paper used.

"That looks very queer to me," Moore observed, thrusting one hand into a trouser pocket, taking a step forward and resting the other hand on a foot post of the brass bed. "Why should he know so much about his right-hand man's bag?"

"And that bag was known to 'Shorty' Hanks, too," Brooke contributed earnestly. "He recognized it when I carried it into the bank on Monday morning. He pretended he didn't, but as I look back at it now I see that he did, and that was why he spoke to me. He knew it wasn't mine, and he fixed up that scheme with Mumford to get hold of it. When they were outwitted he rushed off to Stoughton, for whom he knew the bag generally worked, learned it had gone astray and offered to put Stoughton on its track for a little of the ready."

"That sounds plausible," returned the Chicagoan, "and it looks more and more as if Stoughton were a bad egg. He's one of those fellows that seem all right to you when you are with them, and as soon as you get away you discover that you never saw

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their real selves, but only a mask they were wearing."

"Didn't he say where his bag was lost?" Brooke asked.

"No; he pretended he didn't know."

"But you think he did?"

"I'll bet he knew that it was on that train from Chicago."

Brooke was thoughtful for a moment.

"It's odd he didn't go to the Morgue to see the body of the man that fell off that train then."

"Maybe he did?" Moore suggested.

"And was afraid to identify the body, you mean, lest the bag should turn up later and he become involved?"

"Exactly. Suppose whoever it was this fellow robbed—and you can depend upon it it wasn't Stoughton—should have identified his body as that of the thief, then the fact that Stoughton had identified it would have shown acquaintance, at least, and would, in all probability, have implicated him as an accessory."

"Yes, you're right about that," Brooke agreed. "We seem to be getting a little closer to the crux of the matter, I think. But of course he didn't give an inkling as to the real losers, did he? He made it

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appear that he was the victim. I wonder how he worked this scheme of giving an artificial value to a mining stock? That seems a criminal proceeding in itself."

"You see, he claims it was on a bet. Nobody was to lose by it, of course; except the wager, which he was to win."

Brooke sat down on the side of the bed, and resting his elbows on his knees lowered his head to his hands. Presently he looked up with:

"Do you know I've been trying all this time to place that name of Foley. I remember hearing it somewhere in the past three days, and I can't think in what connection."

"Considering the whirl of adventure you have engaged in," Moore decided, "that isn't peculiar. In this City of Encounters names fly so fast that it's difficult to catch them, and when we do we can't always hold them."

"Let me see," Brooke was saying. "It wasn't at the Hotel Astor. No. The next morning I met Hanks, and then— By George!" he cried suddenly, "I have it. It was while I was in a barber shop on Broadway. It all comes back to me. Two men were talking in the next two chairs to mine. They were saying that a man named Kennedy who was due in

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New York that morning from Chicago had failed to appear, and that they believed he had skipped with certain moneys. 'Foley,' they said, had wired that Kennedy had started from Chicago, and then all trace of him was lost. Or something of that sort. That's where I heard Foley, all right."

"What did the two men look like?" Moore asked.

"I didn't see them," Brooke confessed. "That's the devil of it. One of them might have been Stoughton."

"Not at all unlikely."

"Then Kennedy would be the name of the man my uncle buried in mistake for me, I suppose," Brooke added, with a grim smile.

Moore switched off the electric lights. It was now broad day; and the sun, clear risen, was sending in a flood of gold from across the adjacent housetops.

"I don't know how you feel," he said, "but I'm pretty well played out. Do you realize that neither of us has had any sleep since four o'clock yesterday morning?"

"I've only had about two hours in two days," Brooke replied. "Suppose we have a bite of something sent up here, and then we'll both turn in."

He crossed the room and rang for a waiter.

"We'll have him bring us the morning papers,

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too," he suggested. "I'm wondering what— Good Heavens!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I entirely forgot that I had an engagement with a *Sphere* reporter last night. I'm sorry about that. I was to have met him in the café, and here I was counting money and waiting to hear from you."

"He could have asked for you, couldn't he?" Moore inquired.

"The trouble was he knew me as Mr. Brooke. And—well, there's stupidity for you! I never thought to tell him I had changed my hotel. He must have looked for me at the Astor. He'll think I played a trick on him."

"I only hope," Moore said, with something of intuition, "he won't take a nasty revenge."

But even in his most gloomy imagining Moore could scarcely have conceived such an article as stared from the *Sphere's* first page when the paper was brought to them.

CHAPTER XXII

GUESSWORK

NEVER is a little knowledge more dangerous than when in the hands of a reporter for a sensational newspaper. Then, sharpened by diseased imagination and keen-set by perverted enthusiasm, it becomes an instrument for the piercing of hearts and the slashing of reputations.

The story of the wreck of the *Amaryllis*, as told by the *Sphere* that morning, teemed with wicked fabrication and bristled with cruel innuendo. From its big display heading to its last paragraph it was a misrepresentation of fact and a distortion of circumstance. And as Brooke read it aloud, and Moore gazed over his shoulder at the lying lines, they fairly writhed under the stinging torture of its injustice.

“The sinking off Barnegat, early yesterday morning, of the steam yacht *Amaryllis* by the Norfolk line steamship *Franklin*, by which two lives were lost, is to be made the subject of rigid investigation.”

Such was the fashion of its beginning.

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"The *Amaryllis*," it continued, "which belonged to the well-known young Chicago millionaire, Walter Paddock, had left the New York Yacht Club station at the foot of East Twenty-third Street, at about midnight, bound for Atlantic City."

Moore grunted his disgust. "Was she?" he said. "That's news to me. I didn't know where the *Amaryllis* was bound."

"On board the yacht," continued the report, "were six passengers, including Simon Rosenstein, the lawyer, nephew of Isaac Stern; James Mumford and his bride, who was Miss Colby, daughter of the President of the National Candy Company; Captain John Moore, of Chicago, recently returned from the Philippines; John L. Brooke, of Honolulu, and Miss Alice Murphy, a trained nurse."

"The proposed trip appears to have been in the nature of a honeymoon cruise, for on Monday Mumford and Miss Colby had been quietly married at the Little Church Around the Corner, Captain Moore and Brooke being the only persons in attendance."

"Well, that's a nice one!" Brooke commented. "We were witnesses. Do you hear that?"

"Go on!" Moore urged, his cheeks red with anger. And Brooke proceeded:

"It was a runaway match. Mrs. Mumford's father had no knowledge of the wedding. When

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seen last night he refused to discuss the subject. Mrs. Mumford could not be found, and it is believed she has left the city.

"Paddock lent Mumford his yacht at the solicitation of Brooke, who is his friend. The men of the party had been celebrating the wedding for two days, and it is understood that all of them were considerably under the influence of liquor when they boarded the *Amaryllis*."

"The liar!" Brooke hissed. "Isn't there any remedy for this sort of thing?"

"No," returned Moore. "It's a sensational newspaper's prerogative to guess at what it doesn't know. And it always guesses the worst."

But it was the next paragraph that cut the deepest.

"Sometime during the small hours of yesterday a wordy quarrel took place on board; and this ended in fisticuffs. Mumford and Rosenstein were punched to insensibility, and then locked up in staterooms between decks. Soon after this the accident occurred, and as no effort was made to release the two imprisoned men they were carried down to a watery grave by the sinking yacht."

"Good God!" shrieked Brooke, writhing with indignation. "We can't let them get away with that. If I had that reporter here, I'd——"

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"It's a fiendish outrage," Moore agreed, "but the best you can get is a four-line retraction in an obscure corner."

Brooke, gripping the paper vindictively, read on:

"There was a combined attempt on the part of the survivors to hide the fact that Mrs. Mumford was a passenger on the yacht. It was learned by a *Sphere* reporter, however, that she was taken aboard from one of the Fifth Avenue hotels, where she had been confined to her room since almost directly after the wedding. Owing to her illness a trained nurse was engaged to accompany her on the cruise."

"They got that from that carmined hag," Moore commented. "Captain Conway must have let her loose after all."

Indignant as they both were over this part of the article, it was the latter portion which roused Brooke almost to a frenzy. As he realized what was coming his big eyes opened wider, and his dark face paled a shade.

"Miss Colby," the account ran on, "arrived in New York from Chicago last Saturday and took rooms at the Hotel Astor. Brooke, who registered from Honolulu, arrived at the same hotel on Sunday evening, bringing with him a large amount of money in cash, which he displayed before the hotel employés,

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declaring he held it as stakes on a wager that had been made between his friends, Mumford and Moore, as to the color of Miss Colby's eyes. Mumford had bet \$10,000 that they were blue, and Moore \$10,000 that they were black. The winner, it was agreed, was to marry the girl and spend his winnings on a yachting cruise for all hands. This, at least, was the story Brooke told to account for his large bank roll.

"Neither Brooke nor Moore could be found last night. At the Hotel Astor it was stated that Brooke had left there on Monday morning, and his whereabouts were unknown. Moore is a guest of the Waldorf-Astoria, but he was not at the hotel last evening."

Brooke, fretted and trembling, turned the page. The worst had been told now, he argued. It was bad enough, Heaven knew, but Constance Colby was an American, and probably understood sensational newspaper methods. He could make her realize that he was not so black as they had painted him. Besides, Annette would corroborate him. She knew, at least, that there was no bet between Mumford and Moore.

What followed, however, was more serious. There was a small leavening of truth in that, and explanation would not be so easy. His voice faltered as he read, and the paper trembled in his hands.

"A curious coincidence in this connection is that a young man supposed to be John L. Brooke, of Hono-

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lulu, was killed by falling or being thrown from the Empire State Express, as it passed through Mott Haven on Sunday night. The body was claimed on Monday by Alexander Perry, a Boston stockbroker and uncle of Brooke, and taken to Boston for burial. Mr. Perry admitted that he had not seen his nephew since he was a small child; but the fact that a valise was found on the train containing letters addressed to Brooke, and clothing marked J. L. B., was taken as convincing evidence by Mr. Perry that the body was that of his nephew.

"It is now thought possible it was not that of the Honolulu man, but of a man named Kennedy, and that Brooke may know something of the accident. The story of the wager seems so improbable that it may have been told by Brooke simply to account for the money in his possession. The police are looking for the Honoluluan, and will require of him some explanation of the mystery.

"Kennedy, who left Chicago on Saturday by the Empire State Express, is also being looked for by the police. He is said to have had over a hundred thousand dollars in his possession, the proceeds of a swindling scheme of which certain Chicago bankers were the victims.

"There is a theory that it may have been Kennedy's body which was found in the Mott Haven yards, and that Brooke, either by accident or design, made an exchange of valises, taking Kennedy's with its rich contents and leaving his own in its place."

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As he came to the end Brooke crumpled the paper between his hands and dropped it to the floor. The bitterness of it lay really more in the truth than in the falsehood. This was what he had feared might happen. His reason had warned him to guard against it, and he had ignored the warning. Now the police were looking for him; he would be asked to explain, and he knew that the only explanation he could offer would appear woefully weak. He had chosen to dally; and meanwhile a net had been woven about him.

He sprang up suddenly and turned to Moore, who had ventured no word at the newspaper article's close.

"What a fool I have been!" Contrition vibrated in his voice.

"Sudden death would be too good for that reporter," the Chicagoan blurted at last; "something long and lingering for his."

"No," Brooke returned desperately, "he's not altogether at fault. You and I are to blame in a measure for not giving him the truth. He probably did the best he could according to his lights. As for myself, I have acted like a double-dyed idiot. What right had I to hold on to that bag of money, and regard myself as the only person of sufficient honesty to be entrusted with the search for its rightful owner?"

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Moore pointed to the damask-spread table on which their breakfast waited.

"Come," he urged soothingly, "don't take it too seriously. Let's have some coffee and an egg, and the world will look brighter."

But Brooke was in no mood for food.

"Help yourself," he said, frowning, as he began to pace the floor. "I've got to think out a course of action, and I can do it best on my feet."

For five minutes he walked back and forth, his hands behind him, his head bent forward; while Moore silently spooned his egg, munched his toast and sipped his coffee. At the end of that time Brooke sank into a chair beside the table and poured himself a cup.

"I am going to call up Stoughton," he announced, with recovered calmness, "and tell him the money has been found. I'll still represent myself as a Waldorf clerk; say I've seen in the paper that the money is supposed to have been the proceeds of a Chicago swindle, and ask him whether Kennedy is the name of the man he spoke of last night. I'm curious to see how he'll take it. I'll go on the ground that the Waldorf isn't in the business of holding stolen money and shielding criminals, and I rather fancy that will draw his fire."

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Moore nodded approval.

"But do you think you'll be able to get him on the 'phone so early? Remember he was up late. You'd better wait a bit, and——"

"And be arrested?" Brooke queried irritably.
"No, sir. I haven't any time to waste."

"But the police haven't an idea where Brooke is. Besides, you're not known here as Brooke."

"That's all right, but I'm not taking any chances. Would you mind reaching me that telephone?"

Moore handed the instrument across the table, and Brooke asked the office to connect him with the Albright Apartments. Then he waited with the receiver at his ear.

Presently there came over the wire a low murmur of far-away voices. This was followed by an indistinguishable medley of words, from which grew occasional phrases; and then, suddenly, clearly and distinctly, he heard that which made him press the instrument closer, while his eyes, as Moore watched him, took on a new eagerness, and his lips parted in alert interest.

"Yes, yes," he heard over the crossed wires, "I understand. It's Egan."

The voice was unmistakably Stoughton's. Then in quite another key, and with just a suspicion of brogue:

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"Yes, sir. You're right. I have some news for you. We have located your man."

"Not Kennedy?"

"Sure, Kennedy. He's in Philadelphia."

"But I thought——"

"Can't help what you thought, sir. There's no mistake. He's in Philadelphia, and it appears he isn't any too flush. If he ever had the money he hasn't got it now."

"Have you his address there?" Stoughton was asking.

"It's on South Thirteenth Street, corner of Wolf, over a saloon—Haggerty's saloon. What do you want done with him?"

"I don't want you to do anything, except keep him shadowed. I'll send Foley over. He's here now, and I'll have him off on the first train he can get."

"All right, sir. And now just one thing more. Did you know Colby was in New York?"

"The devil!" It was an exclamation of extreme annoyance.

"Yes, sir. Any orders in that direction, sir?"

"Well, I should think so. We've got to get our——"

Abruptly the sound of the voices was succeeded

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by the whirring of the induction. Then the telephone operator down stairs:

"Is this Mr. Moore? Well, the number you asked for is busy."

Brooke jammed the receiver on its hook.

"Good Lord!" he cried jubilantly. "That was luck. The wires were crossed. Stoughton was talking with a man named Egan. Kennedy is in Philadelphia, *alive*."

Moore stared.

"Then who——" he began.

"God knows. The thing is more mixed than ever. But I got another tip. Who of all persons in the world do you suppose is involved in some way?"

Moore shook his head.

"Colby."

"Not——"

"I think so, though his first name wasn't mentioned. At all events I'm going to find out. I'll——"

The telephone bell interrupted him.

"The police," he hazarded, as he took the receiver once more. "Yes, this is Mr. Moore. What's that? Oh, yes. Certainly. Ask him to come up, please."

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Again the receiver rattled on the hook, and Brooke sprang to his feet.

"It's Colby himself, now, at this hour," he shouted excitedly, "here, coming upstairs. He asked for Mr. Moore, which means you, but you'll let me have a word with him, won't you?"

CHAPTER XXIII

IN A DREAM

MR. SILAS COLBY, President of the National Candy Company, stood six feet one in his socks and balanced the scales at two hundred and six pounds. Clean shaven and ruddy of complexion, he did not look his forty-five years; and his voice, clear and resonant, was the voice of a man still young. Brooke was attracted by him at once. He liked him at sight; won equally by his appearance and his manner, which was unaffectedly cordial. Besides, he saw in him a sturdy, energetic, commanding force that gripped admiration.

Moore, who knew him slightly, had received him at the door, opening it at sound of footsteps in the passage, and had presented Brooke almost immediately.

"I hope you fellows will pardon this early call," he had begun, with a smile that was an even more effective apology than his words, "but I'm leaving for Philadelphia at 8.55; and I felt I must see you both, if possible, before I left."

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Both of the younger men assured him that he had afforded them a pleasure.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Colby," Brooke added, "I was just debating as to whether I dared call you up at this hour. Have you, by any chance, seen that outrageous article in the *Sphere*?"

"It is outrageous," Mr. Colby admitted, as he took a chair which Moore pushed forward, "and yet I have got rather beyond caring very much about what such papers say. I've had a lot of experience with them in one way or another, and I have learned that their reportorial utterances are never to be taken very seriously, they're here to-day and gone to-morrow, and forgotten the next day. But there were two or three statements, or misstatements, in that article that interested me peculiarly, and about which I have come to you boys."

"Of course you know, Mr. Colby," began Moore, "that so far as your daughters are concerned, we——"

But Mr. Colby interrupted him with a lifted hand.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Moore," he said suavely, "we'll leave the girls out of it. I know the whole truth of that matter, and so we won't discuss it further. But the paper mentioned something about a

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possibility of Mr. Brooke having some knowledge of a man named Kennedy who arrived in New York on the same train as he did Sunday night. Now this Kennedy is a person I very much wish to find."

Brooke looked his surprise. Here, certainly, was another twist in the tangle. Why, he asked himself, should Mr. Colby, of all persons, be interested in finding Kennedy, who was undoubtedly the agent of the nefarious Stoughton? It was only a few minutes since he had heard a mystifying reference to Mr. Colby over the telephone by this same Stoughton, and in this connection, but he had hardly fancied that Mr. Colby knew. On the other hand, he had imagined that Stoughton was, in some way, pulling hidden wires for Mr. Colby's undoing.

"I have some knowledge of Kennedy," Brooke affirmed, "though I don't know him." And then he and Moore together related their night's experience, finishing with the revelation of the crossed wires. To all of which Mr. Colby listened with intent interest. When it was finished their visitor stood up.

"What you have told me," he said gravely, "is most important. Stoughton is not the only one who has had detectives at work. But his detectives have apparently been more efficient. I had not learned

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that this scamp was in Philadelphia. My proposed trip over there was in connection with an entirely different matter—in fact, I am running over with my daughter Constance, who goes to visit some friends——”

Brooke wondered whether his emotion at this news was observable in his countenance. A pang of disappointment shot through him, distressingly. In a few hours he had hoped to see her again; and now it suddenly became a question of—probably weeks; possibly months.

“It is better, I think,” Mr. Colby concluded, “that both the girls should be out of New York under the circumstances.”

Moore was affected now in turn.

“Miss Annette goes, too?” he asked.

“She goes to Long Island,” answered the father, with aggravating generality. “And now,” he added, “I must be off.” At the door, however, he halted and turned to Brooke.

“Pardon me,” he said, “but did I understand you to say that you still have this money you speak of in your possession?”

The young man nodded. “Awaiting its owner,” he returned.

Mr. Colby extended his hand, smiling.

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"You must forgive me for not telling you all I know," he begged; "it wouldn't do just yet. But in a day or two you shall have the whole story. In the meantime, don't let that money get away from you. It doesn't belong to Stoughton—I'll tell you that much—and it didn't belong to the man who fell from the train."

"The man who fell from the train," Brooke repeated quizzically. "You don't know who he was, of course?"

The Candy Trust's president's face was enigmatic.

"Just a day or two," he said indulgently, with a repetition of his alluring smile.

"And Kennedy?" Brooke persisted, hungry with curiosity. "Is he to be arrested?"

Mr. Colby patted him upon the shoulder.

"We'll see," he replied, non-committally. "We'll see."

When he had gone, Moore rubbed his eyes with his clenched fists.

"Lord, I'm sleepy!" he exclaimed, with a yawn. "A bed and a pillow for mine; double-quick, march!"

"I'm wide awake now," Brooke declared, "but I suppose we ought to get some sleep while we have the chance. There's no telling what may happen, or

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when. Suppose you lie down there on the bed, and I'll try to snatch forty winks on the couch."

As he spoke, he dropped the blinds over the windows and drew the curtains; and Moore, to make sure they should not be disturbed, lifted the telephone receiver from the hook and requested the office not to transmit any calls until further notice.

Then strained nerves and wearied muscles had their way, and in the silent, darkened chamber the two men slept.

It was mid-afternoon before either of them stirred. Then Brooke stretched his legs, turned from his side onto his back, opened sleepy eyes, yawned, and recovering consciousness dropped his feet to the floor and sat up.

For several minutes he remained seated on the side of the couch, his chin in his hands, busy with an endeavor to piece together the ragged edges of haunting yet elusive dreams, in which Kennedy was the chief figure, with Stoughton and Foley and Mr. Colby dim shadows against a dimmer background. In vain he made effort to recall the relations existing between them in his sleeping vision. All that remained with him, however, was a sympathizing sense of Kennedy suffering through misjudgment and injustice. The details—the whys and the wherefores

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—were vague to obscurity; but it was borne in upon him that this man, through no fault of his own, had been pilloried, and was being cruelly, inhumanly and undeservedly punished.

When, after a little, he got to his feet, he had arrived at a determination. He would go to Philadelphia, and, if possible, he would find Kennedy. And if Kennedy could prove that the money in yonder trunk was really his money, or money entrusted to his care, he should have it—every penny of it—no matter what Mr. Colby or Stoughton or the whole world should say to the contrary.

Inspired by this sudden impulse, he proceeded to bathe, shave and dress, taking care not to arouse his friend, who still slumbered. Then, having thrown a change of apparel into a suit case, and being quite ready for his journey, he stood for a moment, hesitant. And as he waited, Moore opened his eyes and for a brief instant glanced about in furtive bewilderment.

“Gad!” he exclaimed, raising his arms above his head, “have I been sleeping long? What time is it?”

Brooke consulted his watch.

“Eighteen minutes past four, and I’m off for Philadelphia by the first train I can catch.”

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"Philadelphia?"

"That's what I said. Only I don't know about this confounded money. Is it safe, do you suppose, in my trunk?"

Moore sat up and looked about him, blinking.

"It's a risk," he decided. "What are you going to Philadelphia for?"

"To look for Kennedy."

Moore stared in astonishment. Then he asked:

"What do you want with him?"

"I want to know the truth about this thing, and I believe he can tell me—and will. I can't stand this mystification another day; and I'm sick of the responsibility of that fortune."

Moore whistled.

"I think I see," he said, with a laugh. "Didn't I hear somebody say that Miss Constance Colby was visiting friends in Philadelphia?"

"Did you?" Brooke returned, a little irritably. "Well that has nothing to do with my going there." And he tapped his trunk with the toe of his shoe. "Would you mind looking after this white elephant until I come back?" he asked.

Moore, rising, leaned against the brass footrail of the bed.

"How long shall you be away?" he queried, with

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a whimsical twitch of his mouth's corners. "Because, to tell the truth, I'm thinking of running down to Long Island to-morrow."

For a moment Brooke looked crestfallen.

"Never mind, old chap," Moore laughed, "I was only teasing. I'll see that the trunk is kept inviolate. Trot along, and good luck to you! You can catch the 4.55 if you hurry."

CHAPTER XXIV

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By the time John Brooke reached the Quaker City the unreasoning impulse which had impelled him to the quest of Kennedy had been succeeded by a saner realization of the difficulty of success. He possessed the address at which the man he sought had been that morning; but Foley was to have gone there after him hours ago, and Mr. Colby, in all probability, or his agents at least, had also sought him there. What chance, then, was there that he was still occupying a room over Haggerty's saloon at the corner of Thirteenth and Wolf Streets?

In this mood Brooke sat now in a great arm-chair in the office of a hotel that was almost an exact replica of the hotel he had left but a few hours before. It was nearly half-past eight, and the intersecting lobbies were gay with people who were hurrying from their dinners to the theatre. The row of elevators, which occupied the space to his left facing the office desk with its half-score of busy clerks, were constantly ascending and descending, each with

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its complement of passengers. Through the high glass partitions at his back he could see, by simply turning his head, a palm room brilliant with men and women in evening dress still lingering over their dining. In a balcony above him an orchestra was making melody.

A sense of loneliness in the midst of this gayety, added to his acceptance of the probable futility of his expedition, weighed upon and depressed him. To economize time he had had his dinner on the train, and now, fully conscious that if any chance remained to him he should seize upon it without delay, he nevertheless still lingered, giving way to the sullen dolor of his mood.

The panorama of life about him he saw but dimly, absorbed as he was in his own problem. The figures of men and women moved ghostlike and unreal across his vision, until presently, staring, as was so frequently his wont, with dreamy, unfocussed eyes, at what appeared to him merely a blur of light blue, the blur gradually took shape, assumed the outline and proportions of a woman's gown, which in turn encompassed a living entity, leaning across the office desk, in earnest conversation with a clerk.

The figure thus revealed all at once impressed him as familiar, and he sprang up and moved for-

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ward, keenly alive again to all his surroundings, and overjoyed at thus unexpectedly finding in the midst of his lonely dejection the one whom he most desired.

"Miss Colby!"

She turned as he spoke, and her countenance lighted with a pleased smile of recognition.

"Mr. Brooke!"

She gave him both her hands in token of her gladness.

"Oh, how fortunate!" she went on, and her smile succumbed to an expression of anxiety. "I am so distressed. I want you to advise me." Then, turning to the clerk with whom she had been speaking, she said: "Thank you so much. Now I feel quite relieved. Mr. Brooke will assist me, I know."

The confidence that breathed in her words was a tonic to the young man who stood beside her.

"What is it?" he asked, impatient to do her bidding.

"I am anxious about papa," she told him. "He was to have been here at seven for dinner, and it is now half-past eight. He never does this sort of thing. He is punctuality itself."

"Oh, he's been delayed by business," Brooke suggested.

But she would not be comforted.

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"You do not know him," she returned uneasily. "If he were even likely to be detained fifteen minutes he would 'phone to say so. Punctuality with him is a sort of religion."

"Really," Brooke said, soothingly, "I think you're unnecessarily alarmed. A thousand harmless things may have happened. Possibly he is where there is no telephone." He had in mind Kennedy and the room over Haggerty's saloon. "He'll be here presently, I'll guarantee. In the meantime we'll leave word at the office, and you shall come in and dine. You must be famished."

He had never seen her so beautiful as to-night. Her eyes, clear as flawless sapphires, had in them a pathos born of her anxiety, and her sensitively sympathetic mouth was all a-tremble with emotion. She was pale as milk, too, save for tiny blush roses in her cheeks. And her hair, under the brilliant electric lights of the hotel corridor, was as of spun gold.

"No, no, no!" she protested, her alarm more apparent, "I couldn't think of eating; really, I couldn't. I haven't any appetite. Do tell me what is best to do! I have a presentiment that something has happened."

Brooke exerted all his efforts to calm her, telling her:

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"You are overwrought, Miss Colby. It's the result of all the exciting adventures you have been through in less than a week. It is the reaction. No woman could command such nerve as you commanded on two occasions that I know of and not suffer a reaction. But I'll do everything possible, just the same. Suppose, now, we sit down for a moment, and you shall tell me all you know of your father's plans."

He led her to a sofa a little away from the eddying currents of the hotel's main channel.

"Now," he said, when they were seated, "you arrived in Philadelphia this morning, didn't you? What did you do first?"

His calmness of tone and manner began to have its effect. Twice he had proved to her that he could be relied upon in an emergency. Now she was quite willing to put herself completely in his hands.

"We drove at once to the home of the Murrays on Rittenhouse Square. They are old friends—very old friends—and papa expected me to stop with them; but when we reached the house we learned that they had left the city two days ago for Virginia Hot Springs. So we came here."

"I see," Brooke commented, encouragingly. "You came here. And then——"

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"Papa left me for a couple of hours. He had some business to attend to."

"Some business with whom? Didn't he mention any names?"

She hesitated a moment, and then:

"No, he didn't. When he came back for luncheon, though, he said he had met a man on the street that he used to know in Chicago. He did not remember him, he said, but the man recalled their acquaintance."

"Didn't he tell you the man's name?"

"Yes, I think he did, but I really paid no attention."

"Try to remember," urged Brooke. "It may be important."

For a little Constance Colby was thoughtful.

"No," she said at length, "I can't. For a moment I thought I might have recalled it, but it was the name of a dressmaker some one gave me—a Mrs. Foy."

Brooke clutched the situation.

"Wasn't it Foley?" he asked.

Instantly her eyes widened.

"How did you know?" she gasped delightedly.

"Yes, I'm sure of it. It was Foley."

"I have met Foley," he told her. "I knew he

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was coming to Philadelphia. I think I told your father so. Now," he went on, "when your father went out after luncheon, didn't he say where he was going?"

"No," she answered, decisively. "Only that he would be back before seven."

Brooke pondered for a minute, reviewing what he had heard pass between the detective and Stoughton and what Mr. Colby had said that morning in New York. But there was very little in all of this on which to base any shadow of a clue to the present whereabouts of the Candy Trust president.

To consult the police because a man was an hour and a half late in keeping an engagement was, he realized, not to be thought of. If Mr. Colby should still be absent in the morning such a course might be advisable; but in the meantime he must depend upon his own resources, and do what was possible; not that he really believed the gentleman had come to any harm, but simply to allay the apparently unreasoning fears of the fair girl beside him.

And to do what was possible was to try to trace Kennedy, in whom he knew both Mr. Colby and Foley were interested.

"I'll do my best," he said at last, turning to her.

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"I'll see if I can't find Foley, who may know where your father is."

His words and his tone inspired her.

"Oh, how good you are!" she murmured gratefully. "Do you have to go far? Can't I go with you?"

He thought a second before answering.

"I understand it's about four miles from here," he said, "so, to lose no time, I'm going to hire a motor car. I know what it would be for you, waiting here alone, and," he smiled as he rose, "if you'll run now and get something over your shoulders, I'll take you along."

There was some little delay in getting the car, but in less than fifteen minutes, while the hands of the big clock in the City Hall tower behind them pointed to a quarter past nine, they wheeled swiftly away from the curb in front of the hotel, and, with their acetylene lamps throwing a long searching glare ahead, went speeding down the wide, smooth thoroughfare that stretches southward from Philadelphia's centre to the comparatively barren reaches of League Island.

"I'm an absolute stranger in this town, you know," Brooke managed to say to the girl beside him, as the car flew over the asphaltum between two seemingly endless but always converging rows of electrics.

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"All I know is that there was a man at the address I have whom your father and Foley both wanted to see, I fancy. Whether he is still there, and whether they have already seen him, are questions. But slight a thread as it is, it is the only one we have to follow."

Her reply was a repetition of her thanks and a reiteration of her confidence. Then she sat in anxious, strained silence; while Brooke, to whom the pace of the car seemed far from speedy, fretted away the minutes with futile mental objurgations of a chauffeur who, it appeared to him, had no conception of the importance of his mission or the real meaning of the word haste. As a matter of fact, however, the journey was covered in a space of time so brief as to have endangered the liberty of the machine's occupants had the police been half vigilant.

Out of consideration for his companion, Brooke directed that a stop be made midway of the block between Broad and Thirteenth Streets; the idea of her waiting before a liquor saloon being not altogether in accord with his notion of the fitness of things.

"I shan't be long," he said reassuringly. "I'm only going to the next corner, and I can find out in very few minutes whether your father has been there, I think."

The establishment presided over by Haggerty was

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not a pretentious one; but it was neat-appearing and seemingly, from an outside view, quite orderly. A few loungers, men of the working class, were hanging about the door, but they moved aside as Brooke approached, and without hesitation he mounted the single step and entered the bar.

To his surprise he found the room somewhat crowded. The air was nauseous with the smoke of bad tobacco and the reek of beer and spirits, and noisy with the loud and excited voices of the men there gathered, many of whom seemed to be in more or less heated discussion.

Brooke's entrance, however, had a somewhat quieting effect. As the loungers had made way for him without, so this rabble inside parted and cleared a path for him to the bar, and as he stepped forward a single word, spoken by a man in overalls, came clearly to his hearing in the half-hush, and instantly directed his course of action. That one word, the conveyance of a surmise, was "Doctor."

With sudden, inspired assurance, he addressed the busy bartender in shirt sleeves, who was drawing beer from a keg.

"I've come to see the man who——"

The bartender interrupted him, but without halting in his beer drawing.

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"You're the doctor, eh? All right, straight through that door at the back, and up stairs. He's in the room overhead."

A police officer on the other side of the door would have stopped Brooke, but the bartender, seeing the challenge, called:

"It's the doctor, Mack. Let him go up!" And Brooke, wondering, doubtful, fearing a little that he had been too rash in accepting this suggestion at hazard, ran lightly up the stairs.

Here he encountered another officer, who, receiving word from his blue-coated brother below, admitted him to the indicated room.

For just an instant Brooke paused after crossing the threshold. The gas was turned low, making a semi-gloom, in which objects were barely visible; but he promptly discerned a man's figure stretched motionless upon a white-spread bed; and as his eyes accustomed themselves to the dusk, he made out that the chamber had two other occupants. One of these sat in a corner, his body bent forward. The other, evidently a third police officer, stood near him as if guarding a prisoner.

"Turn up the light there, please!"

Something about the recumbent figure on the bed had struck him as familiar. That it was that of a

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very tall man he had seen at first glance; and he feared—felt, indeed—that it was Mr. Colby.

Now the gas flared and he recognized him instantly. The eyes were closed and the face was pallid, but the chest rose and fell in slow, regular respiration.

“Shot in the shoulder, doctor.”

It was the officer who volunteered this information.

Brooke saw now that the shoulder had been rudely bandaged, and that through the bandages the blood was beginning to ooze in a dark red stain. He questioned, however, that the wound was serious. It had probably been painful, and the loss of blood was weakening, and, strong as Mr. Colby was, these had been sufficient to cause faintness. What he needed most was a stimulant, and Brooke called upon the policeman to get it for him.

“Then we’ll take him to the hospital,” he added.

As the officer moved over to the door to communicate the request for brandy to the man outside, Brooke turned his attention to the prisoner in the corner. He was tall and slender, with a not unpleasant face, fair-haired, and wore a short-cropped blond mustache. He did not appear to be over thirty. As Brooke looked at him he glanced up quickly, and the pretended doctor thought he detected a wistful, beseeching expression in the glance. He questioned

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that this could be Kennedy. The fellow was so exactly the opposite of what he had imagined Kennedy to be.

The policeman having ordered what was wanted closed the door again and waited inside. Brooke turned to him for information.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"I don't know much about it," was the reply, "except that the fellow in the corner pulled a gun on two visitors what he had. One of them got away untouched, but the other one he winged, as you see."

"And he is under arrest?"

"Yes. He's in charge, all right."

"What's his name?"

"Smith."

Then he was not mistaken. This was not Kennedy.

"And the wounded man?"

"We haven't got his name yet. He's been unconscious since we got here. Smith says he doesn't know it."

"Why did he shoot him?"

Smith volunteered to answer this question himself.

"I shot at the other man; not at him. I never saw him before."

Then the door opened and the brandy was handed in. Brooke seized it eagerly and poured a portion

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of it between Mr. Colby's lips. Almost immediately a tremor ran through the length of his hitherto inert body. Then there was a fluttering of the eyelids, and his breast heaved under a long sigh.

Again Brooke allowed a little of the liquor to trickle over his patient's tongue, with the result this time that his eyes opened, and, without his raising his head, he peered curiously about.

Brooke, seeing what was unmistakably a glance of recognition, flashed back at him a visual warning to be on his guard.

"I'm the doctor," he said, to make clear the eye message. "How are you feeling?"

Mr. Colby waited a moment to get his poise.

"I'm all right, I think," he answered, bravely enough. "There's an ache in my shoulder, but it can't be much more than a scratch. I fell against something and struck my head. That's what put me out of business for a little."

"Can you sit up?"

Mr. Colby's answer was to do so.

"I've an automobile outside," Brooke went on, "and I think you'd better let me take you to the hospital and have that shoulder dressed properly." With his back to the police-officer, he winked deliberately at Mr. Colby.

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"Whatever you say, Doctor." And a grim smile flickered about the wounded man's mouth.

But at this juncture the policeman stepped forward.

"You'll make a complaint against the prisoner here, I suppose?"

Mr. Colby shook his head.

"I have no complaint to make," he said calmly. "The fellow didn't shoot at me. I know that it was Foley he was after. Only he's a bad shot."

"But——" the officer began again.

"Let Foley make the complaint," Mr. Colby suggested. "What has become of him?"

"We haven't seen him," was the answer.

"Then you'd better let the man go."

The policeman seemed dumfounded for a moment. Then he said:

"I guess you'd better let the lieutenant at the station-house settle this business. Suppose all three of yez come around there."

Brooke rebelled at once.

"This gentleman," he said decidedly, "goes to the hospital directly. After that——"

But the officer was in no mood now to have his authority questioned.

"Say," he growled savagely, "I'm the boss here,

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and what I say goes. It's the station-house for the bunch, and don't you try to get gay."

Brooke was conscious of a sharp pinch on his arm just above the elbow, and knew that Mr. Colby was thus warning him not to object.

"Well," he said, apparently yielding, "whatever you say, officer. We can all go in my machine, can't we?"

The bluecoat grunted.

"I suppose it'll save time sendin' for the patrol," he conceded.

In one corner Mr. Brooke found Mr. Colby's coat and draped it around his shoulders. In another corner he discovered his hat and placed it on his head. Smith, meanwhile, was also preparing for the street.

Then the quartette filed down the stairs, the officer leading and Brooke last with another policeman behind him. Out on the sidewalk, having made their exit by a side door, Brooke ran off to fetch the motor-car. As he reached it, Constance Colby leaned toward him.

"You were gone forever," she cried nervously. "What happened? Did you hear anything?"

"I found your father," he answered in a tone of forced merriment. "So your anxiety is at an end. He had a fall, but it's nothing to worry about. And

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the police got mixed up in it in some way, so we're all going to the police station, just as though we had exceeded the speed limit, you know."

Constance Colby scarcely heard the latter part of what Brooke told her. That her father was soon to be with her again was all she cared for just then. If he had been a little hurt by a fall, she would love nothing better than to coddle and nurse him whole once more.

Brooke had sprung up beside the chauffeur as he spoke, and now they were halted beside the side entrance to Haggerty's. As the machine stopped, the saloon belched forth its crowd of curious patrons, who thronged interestedly about the little group on the edge of the sidewalk.

"All of you get in the back," commanded the officious officer, addressing his three captives. "You, too, Mr. Doctor, for I'm going to set up here with showfer."

Brooke stepped down and stood at the door of the tonneau, where he assisted Mr. Colby to mount beside Constance, who gave a little scream of alarm at sight of the empty, loose-hanging sleeve of her father's coat. Then he pushed Smith up the step, and in a flash was in after him, closing the door with a snap.

The officer, however, seemed in no great haste to follow. Puffed up with the importance of his position, he turned leisurely to his fellows to give a few

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parting instructions. Meanwhile the three men in the tonneau, with heads together, conversed rapidly in low tones.

Such was the situation when another motor, containing one man in citizen's dress and three more policemen in uniform wheeled sharply around the corner into the side street and came to a noisily throbbing halt directly behind Brooke's hired machine.

The light from a street lamp falling across the face of the man in citizen's garb, revealed his identity at a glance to the three in the other tonneau.

"Foley!"

They breathed the name in chorus.

Then, just as Foley with a shout sprang down to the pavement and the officers began clambering out, Brooke's mouth was at his chauffeur's ear, and very quietly, slowly for but a second, and with quickly gathered momentum, his car glided away down the street.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose in the crowd left behind. Shouts rang out on the still night air. Curses, commands, execrations were mingled in a hoarse bedlam of voices. Pistol shots awoke the echoes of the usually quiet neighborhood. Half-a-dozen policemen with Foley in their midst crowded into the other motor, and away it flew in pursuit, less than a block behind its quarry.

CHAPTER XXV

ESCAPE

IN and out, up one street and down another, turning and twisting, whirling around corners on two wheels, the horn bellowing unceasingly, Brooke's car sped, deftly handled and with a speed that surprised him. That no accident happened was indeed a miracle. Trolley cars and wagons were missed by a hand's breadth, and pedestrians escaped by even smaller margins. The gale made by the flying car stung the faces of the occupants and stole their breath on the straight stretches, and the quick turnings from street to street threw them from side to side, to the imminent peril of those that were whole and to the excruciating discomfort of the passenger with a flesh wound in his shoulder.

The flight, though, had been at Mr. Colby's own suggestion. It was he who, thrusting into the hand of the chauffeur a yellow-backed bill, had given the hurried admonition:

"Shake off this car behind, and you'll get two more of 'em!"

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And the chauffeur was doing his best to win. He knew the neighborhood as well as he knew his machine; and when, after five minutes of tortuous winding, he came flying, full-speed, into Broad Street, there was no sign, either up or down, of the pursuers.

But he did not yet feel sure that they were successfully eluded, and so, instead of attempting to double and return northward, he shot away toward Point Breeze, his whirlwind pace unslackened.

Brooke, meanwhile, was keeping a sharp lookout; glancing up and down intersecting streets as they darted by them, and not forgetting to throw a keen eye backward at frequent intervals.

Then, just as all hands were beginning to breathe easier, the lamps of a motor were discovered two blocks in the rear, and Brooke gave the warning. It was impossible, of course, to identify either car or occupants at that distance, but the fact that it was moving at a speed nearly, if not quite as reckless as their own, left little doubt in the minds of any of them that it contained Foley and his blue-coated allies.

There was no moon, as yet, but the night was wonderfully clear and brilliant with stars. They had come now into a locality that was almost suburban.

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Houses were scattered and there were many bare open spaces. Across one of these, presently, Brooke caught sight of a long stretch of board fencing, above which, distinct against the blue grey of the starlit sky, there rose a huge spherical, dome-like object, dark in the shadows but glinting brownish yellow in the starlight.

"Good Lord!" he murmured, with sudden inspiration. "Paddock's balloon!"

Then, bending forward, he shouted in the chauffeur's ear:

"What place is that over there?"

"Point Breeze Park," was the answer.

"Whose balloon?"

"Don't know, sir. Some New Yorker's, I'm told. There's to be an ascension to-night."

Instantly Brooke decided.

"Take us there—to the gate," he directed.

If Foley was their follower this would, he believed, be an excellent way of throwing him off the scent. They could alight, go into the Park, and have the machine proceed, and then Foley might be lured into giving chase to the car, believing them still in it. It was a chance, but a chance worth taking.

Briefly he conveyed to Mr. Colby his plan.

"Tip top, my boy," he applauded. "I've been in

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there to trotting races often. It's a big enough place to get lost in."

About the entrance gate when they arrived they found a throng of interested sightseers. Admission to the public was absolutely forbidden, so these curiosity seekers hung about outside and waited for word that the balloon had been released.

Brooke, the first man out of the machine, elbowed his way to the Cerberus at the gate. He was not certain that the balloon was the one in which Walter Paddock had invited him to take his maiden voyage, but he made up his mind to assume that it was. He nodded familiarly to the gate-keeper.

"A party of Mr. Paddock's friends!" he ventured.

The man interposed his bulk across the narrow entrance.

"Too late," he said laconically.

"Too late?" queried Brooke, nervously. The rest of the party were pressing behind him now. Constance Colby was at his elbow. Her father and the man he had been told was named Smith were just back of her.

"They're just about castin' off," added the gate-keeper.

"But," Brooke persisted, "we prefer to see the

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ascension from inside. I tell you Mr. Paddock invited us. It's all right."

Mr. Colby's hand came out from under his coat, and a yellow-back bill was reached over Brooke's shoulder. Then, there being no longer anything to impede their entrance, the four of them passed into the great enclosure. But even as they did so, the deep, palpitating rumble of a motor suddenly brought to a halt penetrated to their ears.

This was followed by a babel of excited voices among the sightseers on the other side of the fence.

Brooke waited only to see the bulk of the gatekeeper once more blocking the narrow doorway before he was running as fast as his legs could carry him towards where perhaps a score of men, in the light of the half-dozen electric torches, were busy around what he knew was the basket of the balloon.

"Paddock!" he shrieked. "Paddock!"

The distance between the gate and the group of busy men was not over a hundred yards, yet, to Brooke, tearing though he was at breakneck speed, it seemed as though he would never cover it—never even make himself heard.

But as he drew near one man after another looked up, paused in his work, and stepped aside. Then he heard:

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"What the deuce are you fellows at there? What are you stopping for? Didn't I——"

It was Walter Paddock's voice. He recognized it at once, and now as the tone changed, he knew that Paddock saw him and that he was not too late.

"Well! Well! Well!" he heard; and then he was reaching up and shaking hands with the young man who had given up the navigation of the sea for that of the air.

He was quite breathless, but hurriedly, between quick respirations, he managed to say:

"Will it hold four more?—It's got to—Mr. Colby is here—and Miss Colby—and another—and—the police are coming."

"It'll hold six with a little crowding, all right, and we are only two," Paddock returned, contrastingly calm and self-possessed. "Bring on your friends and——"

But already they were coming up, and behind them came a boisterous chorus of riotous voices. There was no mistaking what that hoarse barking meant. Foley's policemen had had their way with the gate-keeper. He had been swept aside, and the rabble from the sidewalk had followed pell mell on the heels of the officers.

Just how they managed it neither Brooke, nor

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Paddock, nor any of the little party could ever very clearly remember—certainly the score of workmen must have helped very effectively—but in less time than it takes to tell it or to read of it all four—not forgetting Mr. Colby and his wounded shoulder, and Miss Colby and her fluffy ruffles—were over the edge of the basket, snug and secure; the last detaining weight had been cast off, and the best and biggest thing in the way of a balloon that money could buy was not merely beyond reach of any poor earth-bound man, but rising rapidly higher and higher, into the calm, clear, balmy, star-illumined mystery of the May night.

For a time, as the city with its diadem of lights sank away beneath them, the hoarse riot of voices came up with resonant distinctness; the baffled fury of the police and the delighted exultation of the mob being clearly distinguished. They heard, too, the clatter of the trolley cars and the clang of their gongs, and from a distance, sharp and shrill, rose the prolonged scream of a locomotive whistle. But gradually these sounds faded into murmurs, a peaceful brooding quiet succeeded, and the city and its lights, growing smaller and fainter, glided slowly and diminishingly off to the northwest.

In the madly rapid rush of events during the last

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hour for all four of the party, who had thus fairly flung themselves from earth to heaven, there had been scant opportunity for deliberation. Whatever had been done was solely the result of individual impulse; and now the impetuous ones began to question whether they had not been, perhaps, a trifle too rash in certain features of their procedure.

Constance Colby was naturally most anxious about her father. The novelty and risk of participating in a balloon ascension were almost forgotten, indeed, in her distress over her father's accident. She did not know yet how he had been injured. Brooke had told her that he had had a fall; but she saw that his arm had been injured—she fancied it was broken—and she knew from his pallor and his drawn lips that he was suffering.

To her questions, asked during the wild dash of the automobile, he had returned evasive answers or had pretended not to hear them. Now, however, she insisted on more definite information, and Walter Paddock, overhearing her and noting, too, that Mr. Colby was suffering, came to the rescue.

“In the excitement of our departure from Philadelphia,” he said, “I quite neglected to present to the last arrivals our fellow voyager, Dr. Henschel. The doctor, who is surgeon-general of this expedition,

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is provided with a medicine chest and an outfit of surgical instruments and appliances—brought along, of course, as a mere matter of precaution—and he will be very glad, I am sure, to make Mr. Colby as comfortable as the limited accommodations here will allow.”

Dr. Henschel, a young graduate surgeon of German extraction, smiled meekly at his friend’s elaborate introduction, and proceeded at once to interest himself in Mr. Colby’s injury. By the light of an electric torch, which Brooke held for him, he examined the wound, which, after all, was very slight, and dressed it carefully and effectively, to the infinite relief of not only the victim but of all concerned, Miss Colby especially.

Meanwhile the balloon, still bearing to the southeast, was likewise rising, and the temperature had grown perceptibly cooler. For cold weather none of the party, save Paddock and the doctor, were prepared; but the host of the occasion rose to this emergency as well as he had to the other. From lockers beneath the basket’s seats he brought forth an ample supply of coats and wraps.

“In a little while now,” he said, as he helped Constance Colby into a fur-lined raglan, “we’ll change our course. I spent most of the day experimenting

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with kites and small balloons, and there was, a few hours ago, a steady current up here somewhere which would carry us a little east by north. Going as we are at present, we're liable to strike somewhere between Atlantic City and Cape May."

Brooke heard this, but for the moment he was not interested. His mind was busy with conjecture as to the personality of the young man who had called himself Smith, and who sat now, silent, and as far apart as was possible in the restricted confines of the basket, gazing over the side into the dark blue sea of ether with its occasional misty white cloud shapes.

Who was he? And why had Mr. Colby insisted on bringing him along? He had confessedly shot at Foley and the bullet had injured Mr. Colby instead; and yet Mr. Colby had not only refused to prosecute him, but had engineered his escape, at no little peril to himself and to his daughter as well. Curiosity filled him to know, too, just what had happened in that little room over Haggerty's saloon before he arrived—the incidents that led up to the shooting; indeed, the incidents of Mr. Colby's day in Philadelphia, following his meeting with Foley.

And he wanted to know what had become of Kennedy, if Smith was not he. Sometimes he fancied Smith must be Kennedy; but only to put the fancy

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aside at the next moment. Kennedy was one of a gang of swindlers; and Smith did not appear to Brooke as of that type.

If it had not been that Mr. Colby was still suffering in a measure, he would have propounded to him these riddles. As it was, he hesitated, hoping that sooner or later he would volunteer to make matters plain in a way; at least out of consideration for Paddock, who must be all perplexity, though, with admirable good-breeding, he disguised it.

A little later Brooke himself felt constrained to tell Paddock something of the situation, but he was hampered by his own lack of knowledge. As for Constance Colby, she was a model of self-restraint. She spoke to her father soothingly at intervals, but she asked no questions. Most of the time she was as silent and self-absorbed as the so-called Smith.

And so, all four engrossed in weightier matters than their accidental aerial flight, what would otherwise have been an event of ponderous moment and abounding interest had become secondary in their emotions.

Now young Dr. Henschel was studying the statoscope.

"We have found our balance," he observed to Paddock, "2,200 feet. Your southwind must be higher."

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Then Paddock, with a "Pardon me, please," to Brooke, edged in beside him, and reaching over the side of the basket dug a dipper into a bag of ballast, and threw overboard a handful of sand.

Instantly the statoscope registered a rapid gain in height. But Paddock, still unsatisfied, continued to drop ballast, until another thousand feet had been mounted. Now, with the constellations as their sign posts and their trailing drag rope as indicator, it seemed evident that the looked-for current had been encountered.

A little later the eastern sky began slowly to illumine, and presently there arose above the dark line of the horizon the great, glowing yellow disc of the moon. In another moment the earth, far beneath them, became dimly visible, and while his passengers gazed with awed admiration upon the wondrously beautiful spectacle, Paddock heaved a long pent sigh of relief.

Just how far eastward he had traveled he had until now no means of knowing, and with that bugbear of the aeronaut, the ocean, ever in mind, he had been far from easy. Now, however, he could see that they were still over the solid earth, though far off to the east the moon reflected a thin silver thread which he knew was the sea. But the direc-

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tion they were now following was away from this thread, and they were apparently moving with accelerated swiftness.

Brooke, still busy with his thoughts, wondering vaguely what the end of this strange voyage was to be, was aroused by a hand laid gently upon his arm, and, turning, found Constance Colby beside him.

"Papa is dozing," she whispered. "His arm must feel easier. But fancy sleeping at such a time! Can you realize it? I never dreamed of taking a balloon ascension, and here we are miles above the earth and going Heaven only knows where."

"Mr. Paddock's course is laid for Broadway, I understand," Brooke told her, with a smile. "Think how providential it was that he and his balloon were right in our path! Otherwise there would have been the police court and no end of notoriety."

The week had held such a whirl of adventure for them both that the unusual, the melodramatic, had come to be as quite in the natural course of events. Consequently there was little eloquence in Brooke's remark, and Constance Colby's reception of it was in keeping.

"Papa hates notoriety," she said quietly.

"He must," Brooke returned, with conviction, "otherwise he would never, with a bullet hole in his

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shoulder, have directed that wild automobile scamper."

But after a little the rare beauty of the night began to weave its spell about these two.

"Is there anything in the world so beautiful as this?" the girl asked, her arm extended in a sweeping gesture.

Brooke paused before he made answer. The thrall of her presence was upon him, and he would fain have told her what he regarded as the very essence of created loveliness, but in the rarified ether in which they were soaring low-spoken words carried clear as clarion notes; and they were not alone.

"The universe is beauty's temple," he answered at last, a little priggishly he feared. "Beauty is everywhere. We have only to open our eyes to have it revealed. To me the most beautiful thing in the world is—" And there he paused again.

She turned to him questioningly. Then her countenance lighted with sudden comprehension.

"Courage," she decided; "and I quite agree with you. I admire it above all things."

"No," he returned, smiling, "not courage in the abstract. Rather, I should say, a brave woman."

"But men are bravest," she insisted.

He did not seem to hear her.

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"A brave woman—whom I know," he added significantly. He spoke very softly, almost in a whisper, but his glance gave emphasis to his words, and her eyes lowered as her color rose.

For a brief moment there was silence between them. When she spoke again she was not looking at him. Her gaze was fixed on the moon, now far risen and partially hidden by clouds.

"You are the bravest man I have ever known," she was saying; "the most courageous. Isn't it odd how destiny seems to have provided that you should be an ever-present help in my times of trouble? A little more of this and my self-reliance will be quite gone. I shall feel that you must always, somehow or other, appear at the crucial moment." She strove to give lightness to her words, but her emotion made itself evident in her tone.

Brooke, too, turned his face to the east, and whispered into space:

"My one ardently craved happiness is to be always near you—in time of peril, and in time of safety."

Unwittingly his hand met hers where it rested on the edge of the wicker basket. At the touch she made no effort to withdraw it, and with sudden impetuosity he covered it with his palm, gathering her

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slender cool fingers into his warm clasp. He changed his position at the same moment, that the others, should they chance to glance that way, might not see, and leant nearer to her, his lips close to her ear.

“I love you, Constance!” he breathed, in accents so low the creaking cordage drowned the sound for all but her. “I love you! With all my love, I love you!”

CHAPTER XXVI

SKY-SAILING

FLOATING serenely through the silvered glory of the moon-drenched night, the arched heavens splashed with stars above, the earth a dim grey bowl beneath, it seemed to John Brooke, loving and loved, that the peace which passeth understanding had at length become his, and that strife and stress and jeopardy, and all their tumultuous progeny had been banished, once and for all, from out his life's borders.

But in the realm of aeronautics Brooke's experience was all too brief to afford him reliable basis for conclusions. Scarce half an hour of tranquillity was vouchsafed him. Then, abruptly, he became conscious of nervous unrest on the part of Paddock and his lieutenant, Dr. Henschel; and his gaze chancing to drop earthward for a moment, he discovered that dim grey bowl had filled with what appeared to be billowy masses of greyish white snow, which, even as he looked, rose higher and higher, until now they were within a hundred feet of the floating basket, and still rising.

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He turned to his right, to find Paddock dipping sand overboard with nervous haste, but the snow billows seemed only momentarily checked.

"We've struck a cold streak; the gas is condensing," Paddock explained, a little agitatedly Brooke thought, "and she's falling like a plummet. I want to keep her out of those clouds if I can." And as he spoke a bag of ballast was emptied. Brooke was next conscious of a thin mist, which grew rapidly denser. They were in what seemed like a fog, at first luminous, but now dark and all enveloping. From afar off there came to his ears reverberations as of low distant thunder. He could no longer see Paddock, but he was close enough to touch him, and he knew that he was still sacrificing ballast.

For a little while the silence was oppressive. Then with appalling abruptness, out of that dead, heavy, almost palpable quiet, there broke with the deafening tumult of colliding worlds a roar of thunder that seemed to rend the universe, and one broad vivid glare of living fire flamed through the riven space.

Brooke's first thought was that the great gas bag above them had exploded, but an instinctive glance upward showed him before the light died that it was still intact.

Then once more that awful silence ensued, together

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with that terrifying, soul-gripping darkness, and he felt the arms of the girl at his side clutching him and heard her quick, frightened breathing at his ear.

He held her close now, regardless of to whom ensuing flashes of lightning might reveal them, and spoke to her reassuringly, with all the calmness he could command.

Out of the blackness came Paddock's voice, too:

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Colby," he urged. "There's absolutely no danger. We'll be out of it in a little while."

But as he finished the lightning flashed again and the thunder crashed in multisonous peal upon peal. A drop of water splashed on Brooke's hand. This was followed by another and another, and in a moment a flood was descending in steady, drenching downpour, as though a waterspout had been opened above them.

He drew Constance still closer and turned over her head the hood of the cloak she was wearing.

And now the lightning became almost continuous, and the detonations unceasing. The illuminations revealed to Brooke the huddled, crouching figures of Mr. Colby and Smith, who, with hats pulled down and collars upturned, were silently accepting

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the deluge. It revealed Paddock and Henschel, too, both busy in consultation with statoscope and barometer.

At brief intervals they leaned over the side and peered eastward, perplexed and puzzled, and striving vainly to get some clue to their course. It was evident to them they were traveling at great speed, carried onward by the rush of the storm, but in what direction they could form no definite idea.

Again the dread of being swept to sea was upon them both, and the advisability of descending was debated in short, pregnant sentences.

Brooke consulted his watch by the glare of the lightning. It marked twenty minutes past eleven. They had been aloft nearly two hours.

Then the cataract which had been falling uninterruptedly began gradually to lessen in volume. The lightning and thunder became more intermittent. Above them a pallid glow was observable, against which the mighty bulk of the gas bag showed grim and black. Presently the moon appeared, hazy and half defined.

Paddock, silhouetted against the grey light, was standing with his hand on the valve rope.

"Hark!" he said, tensely.

Clear and distinct, borne up to them from below,

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came the sound of the sea—the low roar and boom of giant waves breaking against the shore.

Dr. Henschel, with down-bent straining eyes glued to a binocular, was endeavoring to ascertain whether they had yet passed the borders of dry land; and as he leaned far over the basket's side he caught sharp and clear, above the moaning tumult of the breakers, the metallic jangle of a cow-bell.

But almost at the same moment the drag rope caught and loosened and caught again and loosened again; and then, through a rift in the clouds the moonlight streamed to earth, and in an instant the situation was made plain.

Directly beneath them was a pine forest; a little farther on in their course a broad river gleamed, and beyond the river surged the dark, pitiless ocean, with its long line of white-crested combers marking the boundary of the shore.

Paddock saw all this, too, almost as quickly and distinctly as did the doctor, and determined to make a landing at once. To drop now, suddenly, would land them in the tree tops, but it was a question whether this would not be preferable to risking the river, or the little triangle of bare sand on the other side, between the river and the sea.

Brooke saw him pull the valve rope, and looking

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over the side he saw the tops of the pine trees rise suddenly as if to snare them. The momentum of the balloon had been far greater than he could have imagined, but the dragging guide rope was acting now as a brake, and gradually the speed slackened.

Dr. Henschel was standing by to drop the anchor; and it seemed to Brooke that the two men in charge were courting disaster in attempting to descend, even at this reduced speed, atop of what appeared to him to be a deadly abattis.

Already within a few feet of the highest trees, it appeared impossible to settle down without risking the overturn of the basket and the tossing out of the passengers; for the pace of the great soaring sphere was still alarmingly swift, and the casting of the anchor would mean nothing less than a wrenching, probably capsizing, shock.

He could see now that the wood ran close to the river's edge, but on the other side of the river was what appeared to be an open field, whereon it would be possible to descend in entire safety.

"Paddock!" Brooke called at last, roused out of his self-composure by the peril of one for whose life he cared infinitely more than for his own, "Paddock, for God's sake, not here! Across the river——"

But Paddock interrupted him.

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"We can't make it," he cried desperately. "Every grain of ballast is gone; we'd drag in the water, and be swamped."

"Try it, man! Try it!" he insisted, with all the emphasis at his command. "A landing here means broken bones if not death." And then, with his hand on Paddock's arm and his lips at his ear, so that he only should hear, he whispered:

"I'll lighten her, myself. Once clear those trees, and——"

Paddock took him at his word. His hand released the valve rope, and Dr. Henschel at his command delayed dropping anchor.

Another moment and the river sparkled beneath them. Then for only an instant Brooke hesitated, while Constance Colby, directed by him, turned her gaze back at the forest they had cleared. Nimbly he climbed to the basket's rim, and as, swinging low, the guide rope trailed deep in the water, as the wicker barely escaped the white-capped waves, he sprang lightly overboard with arms at sides and toes down-pointed.

And the mammoth balloon, thus freed, rose silently, like some prehistoric bird of the night, and soared majestically towards the opposite shore.

CHAPTER XXVII

REVELATION

JOHN BROOKE, seated in a great chair on the low veranda of a quaintly old-fashioned frame house, looked out across the velvet lawn with its border of apple trees, to where a white road stretched away towards the railroad station, a mile distant. There was a pillow at his back and his left foot rested on a cushioned stool.

Constance Colby, sitting on a bench at his side, leaned her sunny head against the white-painted clapboards of the antique structure, and likewise bent her gaze towards the glaring highway.

All about them were the peace and beauty of a rural Sunday in springtime. From over the fields came the notes of a church bell calling the villagers to morning service; and more faintly, from a greater distance, the murmur of the sea upon a sandy beach.

Presently Brooke twisted a little uneasily, gripping the chair arms, and drawing himself a bit higher in his seat. As he did so, a fleeting cloud, as of pain,

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crossed his face, and the girl leant forward sympathetically, with extended hand.

"You're not comfortable," she said, solicitously. "Is it the pillow, do you think? Let me place it differently."

He smiled, happily, turning his face to her.

"You're so good," he returned appreciatively; "and I'm such a nuisance. I think I'm a little restless, that's all. Isn't it nearly time they were here?"

"Nearly," she told him, with indulgence for his anxiety. "The train is due at eleven-five, and those church bells mean it's now half-past ten. In three-quarters of an hour more they will be with us."

After a little moment of silence, he said:

"I'm rather peevish as an invalid, am I not? No," as he saw her about to speak, "don't deny it. I know, myself, that I'm simply unbearable. Here I should be the most blissfully contented man in the world, having you beside me; and yet I'm fidgeting for those who will spoil our tête-à-tête. Truthfully speaking, though, dear, it's the fact that they're coming that makes me this way. I wish they wouldn't come—not just yet, that is—for I should much prefer this peace and quiet alone here with you and just your father; but since they must come and bring a lot of news with them, I cannot but admit I'm anxious to

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have them get here and so learn all that's to be learned."

She patted his hand softly, where it lay on the chair arm beside her.

"I understand, John," she said, her voice vibrant with a maternal tenderness, which was a new charm revealed in the last twenty-four hours.

"I'm really feeling much better to-day," Brooke went on, with sudden cheeriness. "I have only very occasional twinges in my back now, and my kneecap doesn't begin to be so painful."

"Oh, how fortunate you are!" the girl exclaimed. "When I think how you not only risked your life to save us, but very nearly lost it, it terrifies me. You and I shall never forget Mr. Smith, shall we, dear?"

For if it had not been for Smith, John Brooke's career would have ended two nights before, when he sprang from the balloon into the broad, swift current of the Anamisquan River. The plunge had looked innocent enough. It was not much of a drop from the low-swinging wicker basket to the white-capped waters, and Brooke had learned swimming in the native Hawaiian School, where to breast high seas is almost second nature. But it had chanced that a half-submerged tree trunk, with one sturdy branch

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still attached, lay floating directly beneath him; and, as he dropped, the branch catching his kneecap, had wrenched it from its pan, while the tree trunk had come in scarcely less damaging contact with his spine.

The agony which ensued was of a nature to totally unfit him for effort, and though for a little he had weakly clung to the flotsam which had undone him, he must soon have sunk beneath the surface had not his plight been instantly seen and appreciated by his mysterious fellow voyager, who lost no time in diving from the then rising balloon and swimming to his rescue.

A minute or so later Paddock had dexterously descended upon the fair green of a golf course on the river's far side, and his remaining two passengers had been landed without so much as a jar. Then, a rowboat having been discovered on the shore, he and Dr. Henschel had brought Brooke and Smith safely to land.

The quaint old farmhouse, setting back from the river, and hidden away under spreading locust trees, had been a subsequent discovery. There, after some little delay, the party arrived, and there they were hospitably made comfortable, Dr. Henschel's skill once more being brought into requisition, to the almost immediate relief of the suffering Brooke.

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It had been thought best, however, that both he and Mr. Colby, whose shoulder was giving him some annoyance, should stop at the farmhouse for a few days; and Miss Colby had, of course, remained with them. Saturday morning, however, Paddock, the doctor and Smith had taken an early train for New York—after having arranged for the shipment of the balloon—and then the long-distance telephone had been brought into play, and Mr. Colby had talked with his lawyers and Brooke had talked with Moore, and wheels had been set in motion, which, if they were to believe a telegram received two hours ago, had revolved to a clearing up of most of the mystery that had so perplexedly enmeshed affairs for the past six days.

“I certainly should have liked to be in at the wind-up,” Brooke declared, after he and the girl beside him had gone over the situation together, as far as they knew it. “It seems to me that I have only bungled things from the first. I believe I should have reported the finding of that money to the police. Then a lot of trouble would have been saved.”

But Miss Colby was not inclined to agree with him. He was a hero to her, and her hero could do no wrong.

“No,” she told him, “I’m sure, from what

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papa has said, that you did the very best thing possible."

"But your papa has said so little," Brooke complained. "I haven't discovered yet just where his interest in the matter comes in. I have told him everything I know, and he hasn't told me anything."

She looked at him with a little whimsical pout of her red lips.

"I thought," she murmured, "that he had told you the one thing you most wished to hear. But——"

Brooke reached for her hand and captured it.

"He did," he interrupted, with emphasis. "He told me that I might have you; and, after all, the rest counts for nothing."

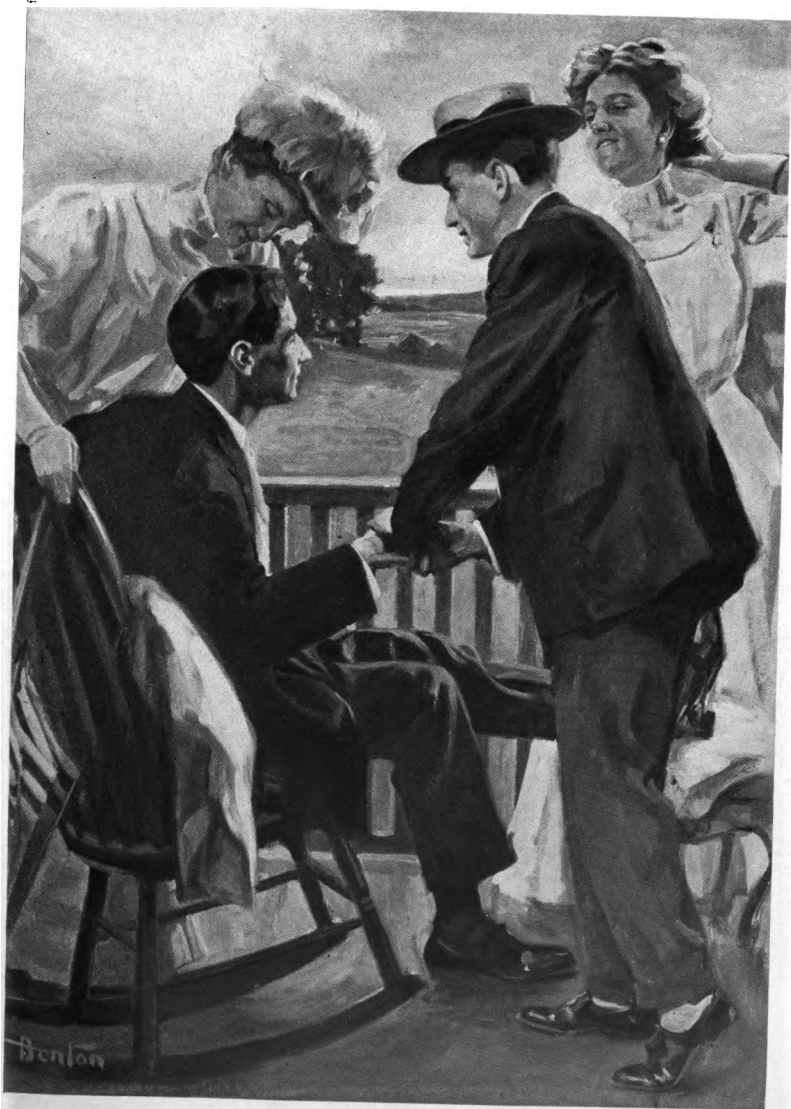
Far away down the white road a black speck appeared.

"Look!" she cried, pointing. "It's a carriage. I heard the train ten minutes ago. It must be they."

"What do you fancy the 'we' meant in Jack Moore's telegram? Who is coming with him?"

"Papa's lawyer, probably: Mr. Emory."

As the vehicle drew nearer they discovered it was a little one-horse omnibus; and, as it circled the lawn, and came to a stop at the end of the veranda, they saw that instead of only two passengers there were four, and that one of them was a woman.



"IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BOTH AGAIN!"

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Instantly Constance Colby was on her feet.

"Why, it's Annette!" she cried gleefully, and rushed off to greet her sister.

Brooke recognized Moore, at the distance, but of the other two men he got only a glimpse before they disappeared within the house.

Then Constance, with Annette on one side of her and Jack on the other, her arms through theirs, came almost running back to him.

"Look at him!" she was saying to them. "The wounded hero! But not so much wounded, either. Dr. Henschel promised him he could walk in two more days."

Moore caught Brooke's hand and wrung it; and Annette, leaning over him, kissed him in sisterly fashion on the cheek, and laughingly whispered "Brother!" in his ear.

"It's good to see you both again," Brooke told them, as though it had been months instead of days since they parted. It was wonderful how intimate they had all grown in less than a week's time.

"And such news for you, old chap!" Moore cried excitedly. "And such a surprise! I'll give you the surprise last. I'm keeping that in the background. But I'm awfully anxious to tell you the whole blooming story from first to last. Do you

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suppose these girls will listen, and be quiet, or shall we banish them to their own gossip?"

"We refuse to be banished," Constance declared with decision. "We are very much interested. And, besides, I am Mr. Brooke's nurse, and I must not leave him."

So they found chairs and grouped themselves about the convalescent, and Moore plunged at once into his chapter of revelations.

"First and foremost," he said, "I'll tell you that our polished friend Stoughton is in the Tombs, and that the fellow who dragged you from a watery grave was Kennedy, and not Smith, and that because they tried to make a scapegoat of him he has turned State's evidence, and has given the whole business away from first to last."

Brooke shook his head confusedly.

"Please, dear boy," he pleaded, "begin at the beginning and tell me, as succinctly as you can, the whole business that he gave away. That's what I'm dying to hear. Whose money was it? Where did it come from? If Kennedy had it, and didn't fall from the train, whose body was that picked up in the Mott Haven yards and buried for mine? Those are the things I want to know."

And in all honesty those were the things that

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Moore did try to tell; but he ran off at tangents at times; and Brooke grew impatient, and Constance did her best to soothe him, and Annette tried her utmost to keep "Jackie Boy" to the straight line of facts.

Filtered through this process, however, by the time the dinner bell rang—they dine at one o'clock Sundays and week days at Pleasant Point—most of what Brooke wished to learn had been conveyed to him.

The money, it seemed, was the proceeds of a rather ingenious coup on the part of a gang of unscrupulous schemers, known as "the Burleigh crowd," which had its headquarters in Chicago, and branches in most of the large cities of the country, with Stoughton at the head of the New York branch.

This particular game had been nearly four months in the playing. In that time they had been able to establish an altogether artificial market price for a mining stock which they called "Tourmaline." Their method was to notify certain brokers in shares of this class that they had "Tourmaline" stock for sale at one dollar a share, and would be glad to supply any orders. The "Tourmaline" offices were in Chicago. The brokers notified were in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, St. Paul and lesser places. Then, a week or so later, the brokers would

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receive from one of the gang's agents in a distant place an order for certain mining stocks; a hundred shares of Tonopah Extension; two hundred of Golden Anchor; fifty Red Top; five hundred May Queen; and a hundred Tourmaline. And the brokers would order the Tourmaline from Chicago, and the stock would be sent with a draft attached; the brokers in turn sending it with the other stocks to their customer, and attaching a draft for the value of the lot. These drafts, were, of course, invariably met promptly; and when, week after week, this process was continued, and Tourmaline was ordered and paid for without question at one dollar a share, the brokers came to regard that as its established market price, and did not bother to investigate whether Tourmaline was really a paying mine or merely a prospect hole in an unproductive district.

There came a day, however, when the orders for Tourmaline were in advance of the orders for all the other stocks, and it happened as a strange coincidence that though the brokers paid cash on delivery for the Tourmaline certificates their drafts when they were sent out to their customers were not honored and the stock was not called for.

Then had come a hasty investigation. The brokers compared notes and saw very clearly that they had

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been buncoed. The people at the Tourmaline offices in Chicago, of course, knew nothing, but it was learned they had taken cash from the banks when the money came back for their drafts, and, though the brokers did not know it at the time, it was this cash that went pell mell into a pigskin kit bag and was carried off on the Empire State Express by a young man named Kennedy, to be "split up" in New York among those entitled to share in the booty.

The swindle was pulled off so expeditiously that there was really little chance for the brokers to get to work on it before the proceeds were made away with; but a Boston broker who had been bitten for more than he cared to lose in just that way, worked the long distance 'phone to Chicago, and got in touch with a clever young detective there named Burke, whom he had employed more than once and knew very well, not only professionally but personally.

Burke wired his Boston employer, Sunday, that Kennedy had started East with a bagful of Tourmaline money, and that he was coming on the same train; his idea being to find how this money was to be distributed, and whether any of the men who had been buying Tourmaline through the brokers would turn up for a share of the "swag."

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But Burke, alive, never got nearer New York than Mott Haven. There he fell from the Express and was killed, "and," as Moore said, in telling this part of the story, "as nobody saw him fall, nobody can say just how it happened; but I, for one, have an idea that Mr. Kennedy——"

But here Brooke interrupted him.

"No, no," he protested with emphasis, "not that, dear boy. Kennedy saved my life, you know, and I won't hear any suspicions voiced against him."

Moore shrugged his shoulders.

"It was a detective, then, whom my worthy Boston uncle mistook for his Honolulu nephew?" Brooke queried, with a sarcastic smile.

Moore smiled in turn.

"No," he answered, "your worthy Boston uncle didn't make any such mistake."

"But——" Brooke began.

"He knew whom he was burying," Moore cut in. "It was your uncle who employed the detective, and he recognized him at once." Brooke stared in astonishment, and the speaker continued:

"You see, he knew by that time that Kennedy hadn't turned up at the New York headquarters of the gang—for he had detectives at this end, too—and he fancied that it was just possible that in that

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shuffle of bags—with Kennedy a little off the level because of the accident to Burke—which, begging your pardon, of course he had no knowledge of—you might have got Kennedy's bag and he Burke's. In that event he depended on you to be smart enough to keep quiet until you could get to Boston and get his advice."

"He thought I might have the money?" Brooke questioned.

"He saw it was a possibility. He believed that Kennedy was afraid to show up without it; which was really the case."

"And when I didn't appear in Boston, and he saw that story of the wreck of the *Amaryllis*, I suppose he thought I had made up my mind to appropriate it?"

Again Moore shrugged his shoulders, smiling.

"I'm sure, old chap," he returned, "I don't know what his mental processes were as to that. He didn't tell me."

Constance Colby was indignant.

"It isn't true," she cried vehemently. "He couldn't think you a thief. I know he couldn't. You're his sister's son, aren't you?"

"He knows now that you're honest, anyhow," Moore declared, "for I turned over the money to

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him—every penny of it—and he'll see that it goes where it rightly belongs."

Then, from Moore's story, it appeared that Stoughton, not knowing, of course, of any bag mix-up, had taken the ground that Kennedy had decamped with the money, and had at once put out his own private sleuths to trace him.

"Shorty" Hanks, whose real name it seemed was Moses, while not directly connected with the higher-class crooks of the "Burleigh crowd," was, nevertheless, in touch, in a way, with some of them. He had more than once seen in the hands of Kennedy the kit bag which Brooke carried to the bank that Monday morning. It was his business to be observant in such matters, and though the bag was very like some others, as had been demonstrated, it possessed for him certain unmistakable characteristics. Jerry Mumford and Lucille had aided him in enterprises of this character in the past, and it happened that while shadowing Brooke he had come face to face with Mrs. Mumford on Broadway. To lay the matter before her took but a moment, with the result that another hansom had followed Brooke's to the Waldorf-Astoria; that scarcely had he turned away from writing his name on the register than Mrs. Mumford had cleverly copied it, and had almost im-

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mediately set about writing the letter which lured him to the Harlem flat.

Being foiled in his efforts to secure the bag's contents for himself and pals, "Shorty" determined on the next most profitable course. He would find out whether, as he suspected, the Burleigh people were looking for it. Discovering that this was the state of affairs he made a deal with Stoughton to put him on the track of it, and the letter making the appointment at the theatre was the outcome.

"But I don't understand," Brooke asked at this point, "how you learned this part of the thing. Surely Kennedy didn't know it, and Stoughton wouldn't tell if he did know."

"We located 'Shorty,'" Moore explained, "at least the detectives did, and, on the promise of immunity, he told all he knew. It looks now as if the prime movers in the Burleigh gang would be convicted and sent where they belong. Foley, by the way, who foolishly appealed to the police over in Philadelphia, has been arrested, too; and the belief is that he is the gentleman who did the better part of the buying of the stocks."

For a little space Brooke was silent. Then he asked:

"Jim Mumford wasn't mixed up with it in any way?"

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"No, I believe not; though there was a suspicion that his object in abducting Miss Colby was to tie her father's hands and prevent him from pressing the prosecution."

"That's what I haven't yet been able to make out," Brooke pursued. "Tell me, please, what interest Mr. Colby has in the case."

Moore laughed.

"Poor old boy!" he commiserated. "I do feel sorry for you, lad, tied hand and foot, and out of the game, when the danger was all past, and it was just calmly interesting. Mr. Colby, I may now inform you, by a strange coincidence, happens to be the silent partner of your distinguished Boston uncle. He happened also to be in Cleveland, ten days ago, when Mr. Foley came into a banking house there, in which he is interested, and gave his tenth or eleventh order for mining stocks to be purchased through your uncle's Boston brokerage house. When the draft came from Boston to Cleveland Mr. Foley had disappeared and there was no money to meet it. Now, boy, do you see where Mr. Colby comes in?"

"And Mr. Colby met Foley in Philadelphia?"

"Yes, met him and—what happened? Foley thought he recognized him, and immediately told him that he was there looking up a fellow who had

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swindled him and got away with a hundred thousand of his money. Of course Mr. Colby agreed to go with him and find the fellow. It was Kennedy, you know, and Mr. Colby had been put on by you that morning. They went to the address you had, but Kennedy was known there as Smith. They sized that up, all right; but Smith was out. They waited for him to come in, and then went up to his room. Foley went in first, and Kennedy pulled a pistol and blazed away at him; and, as you know, Foley dodged and the bullet caught Mr. Colby in the shoulder. Kennedy told me himself that he didn't know exactly why he shot. He had been in mortal fear ever since he lost the bag, that they would make a scapegoat of him, and when he saw Foley he just lost his head."

Brooke was conscious of a footstep behind him. There was a side entrance to the house here, and from the doorway there came now upon the piazza a tall, fair young man, with frank, boyish eyes.

"Pardon me!" he said, as he joined the group. "But I'm not waiting for dinner. I must get the next train back to New York, and I want——"

He had come now where Brooke could see him, and was recognized as young Eugene Moore, the reporter for the *Sphere*.

Brooke frowned.

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"I want," the young man went on, "just to say a word to Mr. Brooke before I go."

"I don't know," Brooke returned coldly, "that I care to talk to you. You saw fit to break confidence with me, and——"

Jack Moore was smiling.

"That's just it, Mr. Brooke," the newspaper man interrupted. "I wanted to explain. I was afraid you would think I was to blame. I'm on the *Evening Sphere*, and I didn't write that story in the morning edition. They got all that at the hotel. I don't know who gave it to them. I went to the Astor the night you asked me to come, but I couldn't find you."

Brooke extended his hand.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said cordially. "I liked you from the first, and I hate to be disappointed in a man. Now, at all events, you have a good story, haven't you?"

The reporter's eyes danced.

"This is a corker!" he said enthusiastically. "I've just been talking to Mr. Colby and Mr. Peters, and——"

"What!" shouted Brooke, excitedly. "To Mr. whom?"

"Mr. Peters."

Jack Moore sprang to the rescue.

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"That's my surprise, old chap," he cried gleefully. "Your uncle came down with us. He wanted to see you. He says you're a credit to the family. If it hadn't been for you they never would have got this gang in the way they have."

Constance Colby's pretty face was all aglow. As for Brooke, he was the picture of embarrassment.

"Nonsense," he protested, "I bungled everything. I dallied, and let circumstances lead me. I——"

"Whatever you did was the right thing," his friend insisted. "At any rate that's what your uncle thinks, and I have a notion he means to take you into the firm and give you charge of a New York branch office."

The newspaper man backed away.

"Good-by, Mr. Brooke," he called. "I've barely time to catch my train. Good-by, everybody!" And with hat in hand he went running across the lawn.

At the same moment a heavier step sounded first in the passage and then on the piazza flooring.

"Where is he?" a bluff voice cried; and Brooke, looking up, saw a kindly, round, smooth-shaven face smiling above him.

"So you're my Honolulu baby, eh? Well, I had no idea you were so good looking. You take after your mother, all right. She was the beauty of the

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family." Now he was holding Brooke's hand—"I'm proud of you, lad. You've made your entry into your own land with flying colors. Fancy your keeping mum with a hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars in your possession that you didn't know the ownership of. That shows your brightness. Why the average man—nine hundred and ninety-nine honest men out of a thousand—would have rushed off to the police and told them all about it. But you? Not much. You lie low, sit tight and jump at every little straw that goes flying by, hoping that it will tell you which way the wind blows. And what is the result? We've got 'em dead to rights, the whole crowd of them."

He stood off and glanced around now at the rest of the little group, while Brooke tried hard to find something appropriate to say. His uncle was a fine-looking man. Clean-cut and bright-eyed, and fairly oozing magnetism.

"And this," Mr. Peters went on, his eyes on Constance Colby, "is the young lady, eh? Oh, I've heard about it. Your father told me. Your father and I have been friends for a good many years. He approves your choice, too, which is very nice, and I approve John's. That's another feather in his cap. See what astonishing good taste he has. And he

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didn't lose any time, either, did he? .You might easily tell he's American born."

There was laughter at this, and the dominating spell of the magnetic Mr. Peters's presence was for the moment broken.

"I'm glad to have so thoroughly met with your approval, Uncle Aleck," Brooke said, his tongue loosed at last.

"And I, too—Uncle Aleck," Constance smiled.

Moore and Annette, who had risen, were standing to one side with clasped hands.

"And I understand you brought this about, too," Mr. Peters concluded, with a toss of his head in their direction. "Your friend Jack here told me all about it, coming down."

Brooke nodded, smiling.

"It was only chance," he said, "like all the rest."

"Chance!" returned the broker, deprecatingly. "Don't you remember your Scott?

" 'Chance will not do the work—chance sends the breeze;

But if the pilot slumber at the helm,
The very wind that wafts us towards the port
May dash us on the shelves.' "

Constance Colby leaned forward. Very beautiful

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she was; her perfect face aglow with excited interest, her eyes akindle with the light of love.

“Do you hear?” she murmured to her lover.

“Chance sent the breeze, but you were the pilot; and you did not slumber. Don’t you feel better now, dear, when everyone says, ‘Well done’?”

He put out his arm and drew her close to him. He was very content; very happy.

“My cup runneth over,” he said.

